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The
Quarterly Journal
OF THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS





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The *Quarterly Journal* OF THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

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COVER: Hope Cooke in a California Poppy Field, *photograph by Arnold Genthe, ca. 1908*.

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Editor's Note

Behind the Scenes

In the winter of 1749 Samuel Johnson's tragedy *Irene*, written more than a decade earlier, opened at the Drury Lane Theatre. David Garrick, manager of the Drury Lane and a former pupil of Johnson's, had made certain alterations in the play that were, according to Thomas Babington Macaulay, "sufficient to displease the author, yet not sufficient to make the piece pleasing to the audience." W. Jackson Bate sums it up as follows: "There is probably no lengthy work . . . by any writer of Johnson's standing that has aroused less curiosity, once it is looked into, or provided less enjoyment than *Irene*."

The premiere performance "went off tolerably," according to Boswell, "till it came to the conclusion, when Mrs. Pritchard, the heroine of the piece, was to be strangled upon the stage, and was to speak two lines with the bow-string round her neck. The audience cried out 'Murder! Murder!' She several times attempted to speak; but in vain. At last she was obliged to go off the stage alive. This passage was afterwards struck out, and she was carried off to be put to death behind the scenes, as the play now has it."

Irene closed after nine performances, but not before Johnson had had an opportunity to peer

into the greenroom and, "from considerations of rigid virtue," rather abruptly withdraw to the other side of the footlights, informing Garrick: "I'll come no more behind your scenes, David; for the silk stockings and white bosoms of your actresses excite my amorous propensities."

This issue of the *Quarterly Journal* attempts to allow the reader a glance behind an assortment of scenes without unduly exciting either homicidal or amorous (other than bibliophilically so) inclinations. Our authors provide a backstage view of creative activity in genres that range from political poetry to poetic photography, discuss their explorations of subjects that include the history of art as well as the art and craft of history, and display attitudes sufficiently diverse to produce not only criticism of the media but a critique of media criticism.

The editors would be pleased if, instead of love or death, the selection of articles brought to mind a primary mission of the Library of Congress—that of providing access to the matter and media required for in-depth analysis of an almost infinite variety of subjects. But be that as it may, we hope our readers will accept the implied invitation to step behind the scenes and see for themselves.

FM

“Bold Venture”

A Wartime Poem by Librarian Archibald MacLeish

Plato so well understood the beguiling power of poems and stories that he devoted a lengthy section of *The Republic* to an argument for excluding certain poets from his ideal city-state. Rarely in the United States has the subject of the poet's place in society received such attention or the work of poets been regarded as bearing on matters of public policy. It was certainly a noteworthy occasion, therefore, when a poem was read before the United States Senate and a letter of praise and gratitude addressed to its author on the stationery of the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations.

The poet was Librarian of Congress Archibald MacLeish, and the year was 1941. The story came to light and a copy of the poem to the editors of the *Quarterly Journal* through a recent letter from Mr. MacLeish to Librarian Daniel Boorstin:

When questioned I used to reply that I wrote only one poem (*The Young Dead Soldiers*) while serving as Librarian. The truth has now caught up with me. On Oct. 22, 1941 . . . the N. Y. Times reported the sinking by the Nazis of a U.S. freighter called "The Bold Venture" and I seem to have written a piece by that name a few days later which Claude Pepper, then a Senator, read into the Congressional Record on Oct. 28. . . . It occurred to me that the Quarterly might be interested in it as a memento if not as a poem. If so I'd be delighted if they wanted to use it.

According to the *Times* report on October 22, Secretary of State Cordell Hull had been urging the Senate to revise the Neutrality Act "to permit the arming of this country's merchantmen"—a measure sought by President Roosevelt that had already passed the House. The sinking of the American owned merchant ships, the *Lehigh* and the *Bold Venture*, added emphasis to the secretary's appeal. The further effect on the Senate of the poem by Mr. MacLeish is recorded in a letter of thanks from Claude Pepper, senator from Florida and member of the Committee on Foreign Relations:

I want you to know what a profound impression upon the Senate the poem BOLD VENTURE made. I wish you could have seen the Senate as I read it in the course of my speech, as you will find in the Congressional Record of October twenty-eighth. You could have heard a pin drop in the Senate the attention was so rapt. I am a thousand times obliged to you because it helped me immensely in what I was trying to say—indeed in what I shall ever try to say on those distressing but challenging forces which are moving through the earth.

Plato favored the poet who employed his power to infuse the citizens of the republic with virtue and courage and a respect for the gods. He would have found nothing to complain of in "Bold Venture." JH

Autochromes

by Mary Lethbridge

Visitors to the Library of Congress since "Autochromes: Color Photography Comes of Age" went on exhibit in February 1980* have been surprised to see more than seventy records of a vanished age—portraits, interior and domestic scenes, and landscapes reminiscent of Renoir and Monet—all in breathtaking color and all from a period when most of the viewers believe color photography did not exist. The exhibition was assembled from original Autochrome plates dating from 1907 to the mid-1930s in American and European collections, including those of the Library itself, the National Geographic Society, the Ilford Collection of Lumière Autochromes, the Royal Photographic Society of Great Britain, and the Ilford-Jasienski Collection.

Photographers and scientists had been trying to capture color with a camera for fifty years when Louis Lumière began to work on the problem. Son of a photographer in Lyons, France, he had already developed, at seventeen years of age, the "blue plate" that replaced the wet collodion plate then in use and put the family business on a firm footing. And with his brother Antoine he had invented the cinematograph, the first successful means of projecting images on a screen so that an audience could see them. The method of moving the pictures came to him one sleepless

Nile boats at Luxor. n.d. *Photographer unknown, from the Royal Photographic Society Collection, no. 3.*

*"Autochromes: Color Photography Comes of Age" will be circulated to libraries and museums in 1981. For information write to the Library of Congress, Exhibits Office, Washington, D.C. 20540.

Mary Lethbridge is the Library's Information Officer.







Fruit still life. 1920. Photographed by Bellingard, from the
Ilford-Lumière Collection.



Mysterious beauty, ca. 1910. Photographed by Arnold Genthe, from the Arnold Genthe Collection in the Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress.

This luminous portrait of a San Francisco society woman has been reproduced on a poster announcing the Library's Autochrome exhibition.

FOLLOWING PAGES: Hope Cooke in a California poppy field, ca. 1908. *Photographed by Arnold Genthe, from the Arnold Genthe Collection in the Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress.*

The American photographer Arnold Genthe (1869-1942) was born in Berlin. Although he worked in color and did many nature studies, he became internationally famous for his portraits. The Arnold Genthe Collection in the Library of Congress numbers 380 Autochrome plates among his thirty thousand photographs and photographic negatives.





The youngest daughter of Louis Lumière, Yvonne, with her numerous family of dolls. 1913. *Photographed by Louis Lumière, 1864-1948.*

Now Mme Jean-Michel LeFrancq, Yvonne came with her husband from Lyons to the opening of the Library's exhibition, to which they presented this photograph. Louis and Antoine Lumière married sisters, and their sisters married brothers of the same family; many of the early Lumière Autochromes are of members of this close-knit family.



night in 1894; success in color photography came only after years of trial and error, so long that his brother often told him, "You're wasting your time. You're taking on the impossible."

By 1904, however, Louis Lumière had developed the Autochrome, one photographic plate that would register color in place of the number of plates used in the "trichromie" process. After experiments with various grains, he achieved results with microscopic grains of potato starch, selected for uniform size, dyed red-orange, green, and violet, judiciously mixed and spread

in a seemingly colorless layer on a glass plate, then covered with a photographic emulsion. Because the grains of starch were round, he filled the interstices with carbon dust. The plate was exposed to the image for a second in bright daylight, longer if the light was not strong. Following exposure the plate was developed in a regular bath in almost total darkness, then exposed to natural light, washed to eradicate the unused silver grains, fixed, and dried. Although development took longer than that for a black-and-white image, it was easy for amateurs to master

Madame Tournassoud sitting by the wayside [near Lyons]. 1909. Photographed by Jean Tournassoud, from the Ilford-Lumière Collection.

A friend of the Lumière, Major Tournassoud used the Autochrome process from the time of its discovery. Tournassoud was a professional army officer for thirty-three years. At the end of World War I he was in charge of all army photographic and cinematographic services.



and the results—color tones true to the original image, depth, and clarity—were amazing.

By the time he announced the process Louis Lumière had invented the machinery it needed, vats to float and separate the grains of starch, canvas rollers to dry them, equipment for dying, and laminators to crush and smooth the coating. By 1913 the Lumière factory was turning out six thousand Autochrome plates a day, each one holding about 75 million grains of starch. They were in use for about thirty years, until the development of color film in the 1940s. Thousands of

Autochrome plates are still in existence, and so stable was the process that plates abandoned in Antarctica in 1913 and discovered only in 1950 were found to be perfect when they were developed. These images are unique, however, and the need for preserving the early photographs, remarkable achievements in color photography, is evident. The Library's exhibition photographs were directly printed from the Autochrome plates on fade-resistant Ilford Cibachrome material, ensuring their preservation for generations to come.

An Uncommon Curiosity

In Search of the Shows of London

by Richard D. Altick

Back in 1966, I tossed a memorandum into the suggestion box I keep, what Henry James might have called his *donnée* file. "Wouldn't it be fun—and instructive," I asked my future self, "to do a short book on the various kinds of exhibitions that were a prominent feature of the London scene during the nineteenth century? The various panoramas (and other '-amas'), George Catlin's exhibitions of his Indian paintings, Haydon's catastrophic display of his large can-

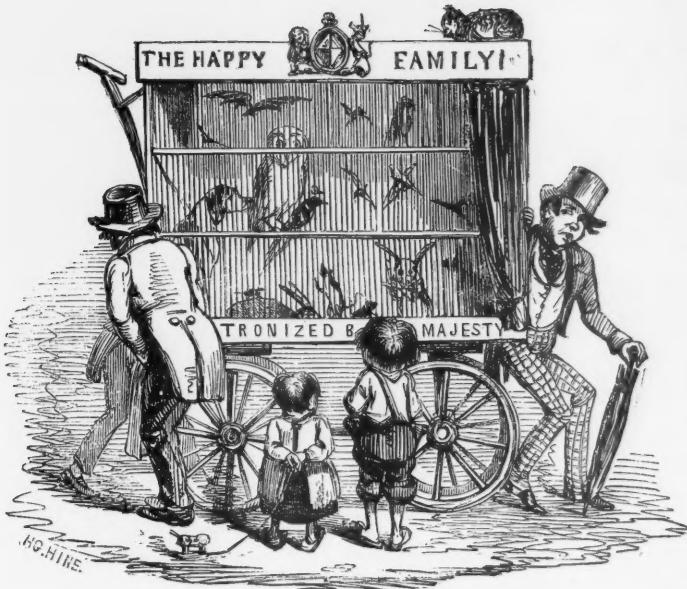
vases, perhaps shows on the Barnum order, for example, the presentation of General Tom Thumb. And Tussaud. There was great variety. And the nature of the shows, changing no doubt from generation to generation, would reveal much about the popular interests of each period, and probably something of the attempt to combine entertainment with instruction. The exhibitions would be an out-of-the-way, but significant, index to cultural conditions.

"Moreover," I continued, "there are probably many stories connected with them. Some were smash hits and immediately had imitators; others were flops. Were there entrepreneurs who made a living setting up such exhibitions? Where were they held? How many people attended? How long did they last? What were their publicity methods? Were there different kinds of exhibitions for different classes?"

Six years later, having finally cleared my desk, I began to seek the answers to such questions. When the resulting book was published in 1978, I looked at that memo again. "Short book" indeed! *The Shows of London*, as it came from the press, ran to 553 double-columned pages and included 180 illustrations. Reviewers, otherwise well disposed, vied with one another to suggest various practical purposes to which the weighty volume could be put, such as serving as a bed board for people with backache.

Richard D. Altick is Regents' Professor of English at Ohio State University. His research interests include literary biography, bibliography, and nineteenth-century English literary and social history. This article, commissioned by the Center for the Book in the Library of Congress, recounts his experience doing research for his most recent book, *The Shows of London*, published by the Belknap Press of Harvard University Press in 1978. Among his other books are: *Victorian People and Ideas* (1973), *Victorian Studies in Scarlet* (1970), *To Be in England* (1969), *Lives and Letters* (1965), *The English Common Reader* (1957), *The Scholar Adventurers* (1950), and editions of Browning's *The Ring and the Book* (1971) and *Carlyle: Past and Present* (1965). He is also the author of *The Art of Literary Research* (1963) and, with Andrew Wright, *Selective Bibliography for the Study of English and American Literature* (1960), as well as a published lecture on *Librarianship and the Pursuit of Truth* (1974).

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"While museumlike exhibitions of curious natural and 'artificial' objects brought something of the Enlightenment spirit to the relatively uneducated members of the middle class, on a lower social level displays of living beings (and of beings which had once been alive) were catering to what today would be called the mass audience. . . ." People looked for amusement to "escape from their over-crowded dwellings and the general penury and emptiness of their everyday existence. Since few could read, books were of no use to them, so they sought their diversion in the streets, at taverns, pleasure gardens, fairs—at all of which, exhibitions of one kind or another were a prominent feature" (*The Shows of London*, p. 34). Engraving by H. G. Hine, from *Punch*, or the London Charivari, vol. 4 (1843), p. 205.

But I was right about the fun and instruction. I experienced plenty of both as I explored what turned out to be an enormous field of English social history that nobody had ever bothered even to map. To be sure, a solitary voice had been raised in 1899, in that wonderful old ragbag of obscure, trivial, and wildly miscellaneous information *Notes and Queries*. "The subject of exhibitions in London," observed a correspondent, "is of great interest, and so far as I know, is one of the few subjects of which no reasonably comprehensive history has been published." But seemingly nobody else had recognized the subject's very existence, let alone its potential importance. For the next several years, I immersed myself in the records of the London entertainment business, the scope of the research inexorably widening until the beginning of the narrative was pushed back to Tudor times and the full roster of topics came to include almost everything that three centuries of curiosity-hungry Londoners paid to gape at. These ranged from the mountebank booths at Bartholomew Fair and the "ragged regiment" of

royal effigies at Westminster Abbey to exhibitions of freaks, automatons, waxworks, architectural models, famous paintings reproduced in needlework, and—particularly—the several kinds of pictorial shows, called mechanical theaters, panoramas, dioramas, and cosmoramas, which were in their various ways the ancestors of the modern cinema.

During all this research, there were few dramatic moments such as one associates with the celebrated saga of the Boswell papers, the unmasking of Thomas J. Wise's bibliographical forgeries, or the discovery of the true circumstances of the murder of Christopher Marlowe in a Deptford tavern. Coming upon a seventeenth-century printed copy of a play by Elkanah Settle bound up in an old volume labeled "London Pamphlets" was an isolated event. But there are other pleasures, as well as frustrations, in research. In the case of *The Shows of London* these came mainly from the fact that I was following in no one's footsteps. There were no bibliographies bearing on the history of London exhibitions, no preliminary sketches of



"A common curiosity erased social distinctions: the quality and the rabble, the cultivated and the ignorant mingled to see the latest marvel. Although most came because their innate relish for the sensational, the mysterious, and the grotesque was titillated by stridently announced new importations, some—the educated minority—came out of genuinely scientific motives" (The Shows of London, p. 36). Illustration from Punch, or the London Charivari, vol. 4 (1843), p. 195.

the territory. All I had to work with was a body of information that might be imaged as a huge (sometimes it seemed limitless) ball of tangled yarn from which thousands of loose ends dangled. Instead of following a more or less systematic procedure, all I could do was tug at those strands, one by one, and see where they led.

Some broke off almost at once; they led nowhere. Others proved to be intricately entwined in other tangles that had to be sorted out. One small clue might lead to ten more clues. I learned afresh the wisdom of Roger Williams's sage remark (1643): "A Little Key may open a Box, where lies a bunch of Keyes." The process of gathering raw material was so tortuous that it would be impossible to reconstruct the successive steps that led to any single fact. Sometimes, happily, one small lead took me to a bonanza I had no reason to anticipate. In a routine check of William Matthews's bibliography of British diaries I found a reference to a two-volume work by three Persian princes, describing their visit to London in 1836. The reference merely stated that they had attended an exhibition of "erudite fleas." But when located the book proved to contain many passages recording their detailed, if more picturesque than trustworthy, impressions of several of the leading London shows of the day. The more I worked, during the several periods I spent in London libraries, the more open-ended my project appeared. Although a substantial amount of repetition is inevitable in any wide-scaled program of research, there was always the possibility of new and illuminating data awaiting the next turn of the page or the arrival of a new batch of dusty books at my desk. Often, when the law of diminishing returns seemed about to operate in a given library, fresh prospects opened up that brought me back the next day, and the day after that.

There was drudgery aplenty, though long experience equips the scholar to make the necessary mechanical labor his work involves as efficient as it can be. His eye, trained like an electronic scanner to respond whenever it meets one of the hundreds of significant words that constitute the vocabulary of the current investigation, runs swiftly down column after column of indexes or page after page of unindexed books,



The British Museum had its beginnings in 1700 when Sir John Cotton bequeathed to the nation his grandfather's library, containing state papers and biblical and other manuscripts, which were housed in 1759 in Montagu House, purchased according to an act of Parliament. A new wing was added after the purchase of the Elgin Marbles in 1816 to house them along with Egyptian antiquities George III had presented in 1801 and the Towneley Marbles purchased in 1805. This view of the new wing is from Ackermann's Repository of the Arts (1819), plate 16. A special quality of the British Museum is described in *The Shows of London* (p. 26): "This was the first museum in Europe to be explicitly open to the people. According to the act of incorporation, it was intended 'not only for the inspection and entertainment of the learned and the curious, but for the general use and benefit of the public.' But, in practice, this ideal of a museum, freely open to the public, was resisted by the authorities for a full century.

while his mind occupies itself with other things. When the eye meets a pertinent word, it automatically stops and alerts the scholar, who then reaches for his ballpoint pen and pad of note slips.

But in the midst of drudgery, boredom never set in. Not with so colorful and lively a subject as mine, offering, as it did, constant revealing insights into the daily lives and the diversified imaginative experiences of ordinary Londoners from the reign of Elizabeth I to the death of Victoria's prince consort. Sometimes the bright-

ness of a London summer day beckoned: when the sun shines in England, the American anglophile hates to linger indoors. But total absorption in the English past is a pleasure too, even when the sheer bulk of information mounting up makes the return of British Library call slips reporting that a desired book is "Missing" or "Destroyed by Bombing" an occasion for secret rejoicing.

Although every research library, no matter where located, has a flavor, a presence of its own, in England those differences are more

"The Tower of London was the city's supreme historical monument. A great deal of dramatic English history was preserved within those grim walls . . . [and] it had several specific attractions which made it an exhibition place as well. . . . Besides housing the royal menagerie, the Tower came to be the stronghold of the crown jewels, first exhibited after the Restoration, and of a formidable store of arms and armor, ancient and modern" (The Shows of London, p. 87). Illustration from The Illustrated London News, March 29, 1845.



pronounced—just as English society has always nourished the personal differences that, in extreme cases of nonconformity, breed the cherished English eccentric. The London Library, where I broke ground for my research because it has over two hundred shelf-feet of books on London history and topography, was established in 1841 when Thomas Carlyle and some of his fellow writers decided they could no longer put up with the annoyances and distractions in the British Museum reading room. Carlyle testified before a parliamentary investigat-

ing committee that respectable families used the room as a convenient day-care center for their weak-minded uncles or sons, among them an alleged lunatic who blew his nose punctually every half hour. Furthermore, Carlyle complained, the reading room harbored the biggest fleas known to science. The private subscription library which these refugees founded, facing leafy St. James's Square just south of Piccadilly, has counted among its members hundreds of well-known authors and scholars, including in modern times such luminaries as T. S. Eliot and

E. M. Forster. The visiting American student, who for a modest fee may have access to London's best stock of serious books outside the British Library, finds himself reading alongside men and women whose names are familiar to every reader of the *Times Literary Supplement*.

The largest collection of books, prints, maps, manuscripts, and printed miscellany dealing with the City of London proper, as well as with much of the surrounding metropolitan area, is at the Guildhall Library, not far from the traffic-clogged Bank corner. When I worked there (it has since moved to ultramodern quarters not far away), the spacious reading room under high gothic arches was quiet and uncrowded, although, to be sure, the presence of a young man who spent hours at his table making paper airplanes stirred unsettling memories of Carlyle's lunatic. Aided by a cataloging system particularly designed to organize the library's

specialized resources, I was served day after day with a wealth of rare pamphlets, volumes of out-of-the-way periodicals that could have been found only with difficulty, if at all, in America, and teeming scrapbooks of prints and playbills.

The Gabrielle Enthoven Collection is to the historian of English drama and other theatrical entertainments what the Guildhall is to the specialist in London history. For many years it had been housed, as it was when I worked there, in

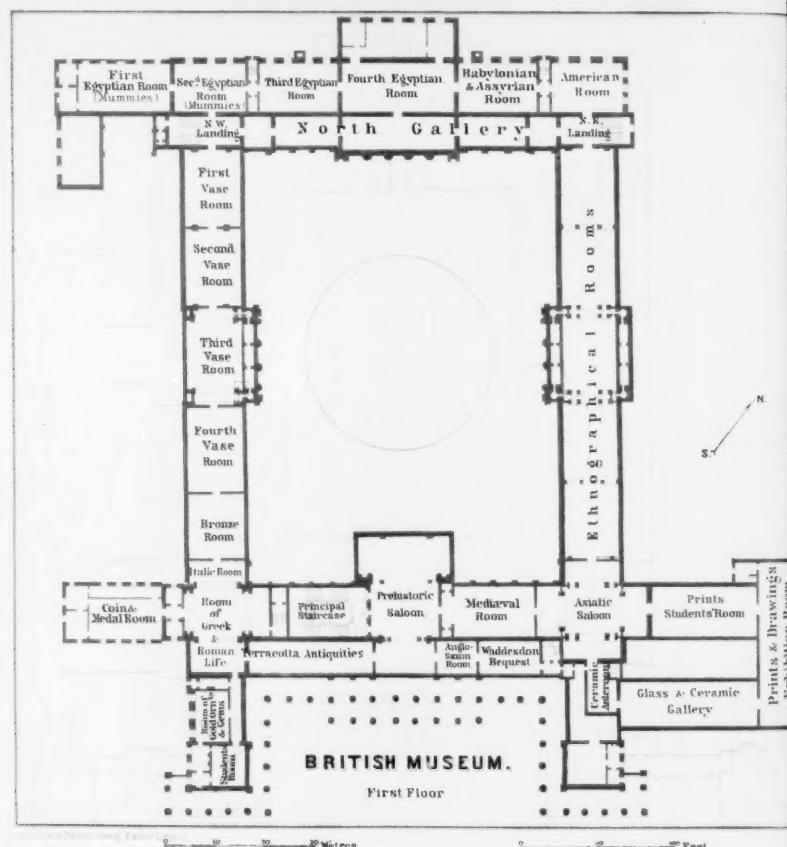
"Attendance at the museum continued to grow—a sign of how persistent and keen was Londoners' hunger for any kind of free exhibition, however poorly presented and maintained, but also, perhaps, evidence of their growing disposition to assert their rights" (The Shows of London, p. 500). Easter Monday—The Great Zoological Gallery, British Museum, from The Illustrated London News, March 29, 1845.



British Museum, London. The principal facade, facing on Great Russell Street, has two projecting wings and a portico in the center, with forty-four Ionic columns. The pediment is decorated with allegorical figures and a depiction of "Progress of the Human Race." This building was constructed in 1823-55 on the site of Montagu House. Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress.



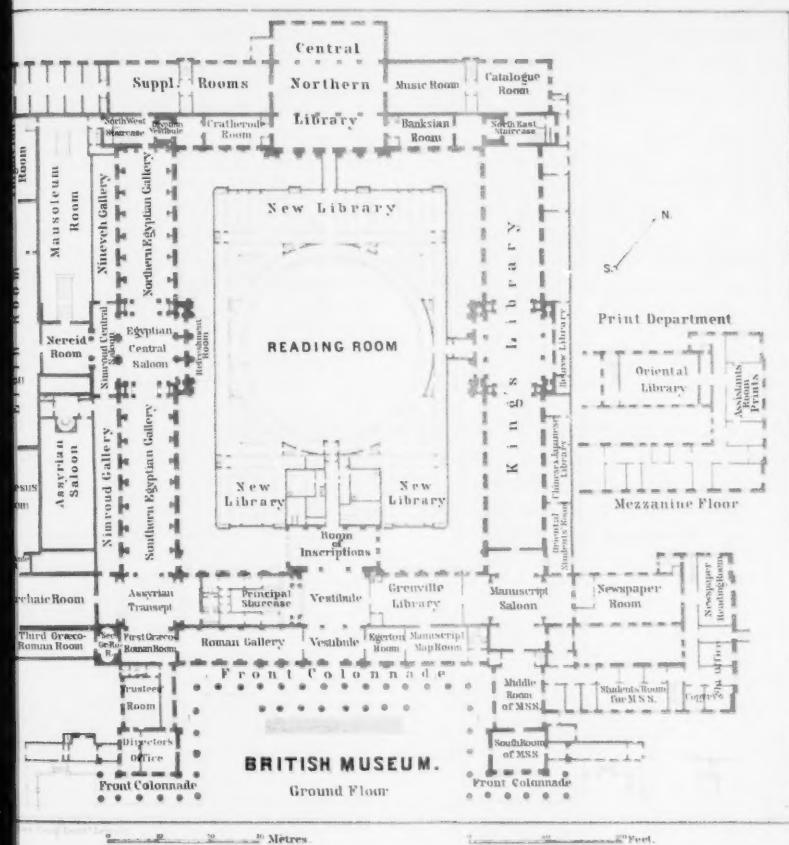
Plan of the British Museum. From Karl Baedeker, London and Its Environs, Handbook for Travellers (Leipzig: Karl Baedeker, Publisher, 1908), following p. 290.



an obscure corner of the Victoria and Albert Museum. At this moment it is inaccessible to scholars, awaiting the provision of a suitable permanent home. The Enthoven is London's most extensive collection of English theatrical memorabilia not in private hands—flimsy playbills by the tens of thousands in their riotous mélanges of typefaces and exclamation points, prints, photographs, posters (some, for circuses, as big as bed sheets, and accordingly hard to store), programs, promptbooks, designs for scenery, even maquettes—miniature mockups—of stage sets, dating from as long ago as the eighteenth century.

The biggest all-embracing collection of books in London is, of course, the British Library—a

new name that is hard to get used to, because for over two centuries, until 1973, the institution was known as the library of the British Museum. It is to the old name, not the new, that a sentimental aura belongs, an aura composed of memories of Karl Marx, Dickens, George Eliot, George Gissing, and the countless other writers and scholars who have worked under the great cream, gold, and blue dome. Every scholar feels a certain affection for it, if not precisely reverence: it is the place where many of the books on English literature and history that contributed to his education were gestated. At the same time, though, the visiting researcher is bound to become impatient as the hours pass and the ill-paid attendants in their soiled jackets, moving



among the desks that radiate spokelike from the platform that serves as the circulation nerve center, seem always to be delivering books to other desks than his. Apart from reading the morning newspaper, repairing to the Museum pub across the street during licensing hours, browsing in the formidable array of reference books that line the room's walls, or speculating on who one's fellow researchers are, where they come from and what they are reading, there is little to pass the time.

The waste is all the more regrettable when the probability is that some of the books, when they do arrive, will be glanced through and cast aside, as of no value, within a few minutes. But there is a way of circumventing the deliberate pace of British Library service. Adjoining the reading room is the North Library, where some classes of books, rare or bulky, are delivered. By setting up two pieds-à-terre, one in the reading room and one in the North Library, it is possible to keep two streams of book requests and deliveries going at the same time. Since the British Library nowadays is not as crowded as it was a few years ago, when readers had to be there at opening time if they were to find a seat, there is nothing really unethical about this arrangement apart from the fact that keeping a double establishment in London somehow implies kinship with the respectable Victorian gentleman who kept one house for his family in Bloomsbury and another for his mistress in St. John's Wood.

I must mention one other rich collection which is, as yet, little known or used: the John Johnson Collection of Printed Ephemera at the Bodleian Library in Oxford. From 1925 to 1946 John Johnson had the title of "printer to the University"; he was the man in charge of producing the books of the Oxford University Press. He was deeply interested in the history of his trade, especially in typography and printing as they figured in everyday life. In pursuit of this vocational avocation, he collected all kinds of printed material generated by the needs of commerce and social life and intended to be thrown away after use—handbills, advertising and public-notice posters, restaurant menus, grocery wrappers, beer bottle labels, railroad timetables, cigarette cards, business forms, souvenirs of holiday resorts, postcards, mail order catalogs, fashion plates, even mere price

tags and tram tickets. Now they are mounted on stout cards in some three thousand tall filing boxes arranged in such classifications as "Soaps," "Patent Medicines," "Motor Cars," "Dress," "Politics," "Slavery," and "Military Affairs." There are upward of 176 boxes on "Theatre" alone. My own interest drew me to the dozens of boxes labeled "Wax Works," "London Play Places," and "Panoramas." Next to museums of everyday life, with which England abounds, one of the best ways to sense the pulse of a bygone era is to delve into the printed matter that accompanied people's daily activity. And so John Johnson's collection, made to illustrate a particular aspect of technological history, actually is a rich source for the study of social history at large.

The contents of the boxes I used typified one major category of raw material indispensable to the history of entertainment. Elsewhere I found those same kinds of "primary documents" not only gathered in loose form in boxes but pasted into scrapbooks which proved to be both the joy and the bane of my daily research. The joy, because the scrapbooks preserved, in addition to playbills and prints, page after page of tiny advertisements and news items clipped from eighteenth- and nineteenth-century newspapers, thus sparing me the inordinate labor of going through whatever files of the newspapers happened to survive. The bane, for two reasons. One was the sheer bulk of those folio volumes, so big and unwieldy that they could not be propped up and therefore had to be examined while I stood bending over them. (At the Victoria and Albert Museum I once called for a scrapbook of London scenes that proved to be so heavy it could not be lifted but had to be dragged from the delivery cart to my table.) But more irritating was the fact that the compilers of those scrapbooks, antiquarians and hobbyists long since dead, often failed to note the date and source of each clipping as they pasted it in. My gratitude for their labors consequently was tempered by exasperation and worse, not only because of the lack of dates but because those scrapbooks were mute evidence of the wholesale destruction of what were deemed at the time totally expendable sources (nothing but old newspapers!) but which were actually irreplaceable. I could not help remembering that during

the Second World War, some thirty thousand bound volumes of newspapers from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were lost when the British Museum's newspaper repository in the northern suburb of Colindale was wrecked by bombing and several ensuing days of rain turned its contents into tons of soggy pulp. There, the destruction was the price of a savage war. The scrapbook makers' intentions, by contrast, were wholly honorable and innocent, but through either negligence or shortsighted policy they turned out to be vandals. So I could not help execrating them at the same time that I benefited from their visionary confidence that someone eventually would come along to make use of what they had so laboriously assembled.

My debt was especially great to the reverend antiquary Daniel Lysons (1762-1834), who left to the British Museum six great folios entitled *Collectanea: or A Collection of Advertisements from the Newspapers* beginning in 1661. Lysons was sufficiently prominent to merit an article in the *Dictionary of National Biography*. But others of my unwitting benefactors remain nameless, for example one "G.S.", a resident of Peckham in 1840, who farsightedly put together for me a scrapbook called *Exhibitions of Mechanical and Other Works of Ingenuity*, from the preface to which I got the epigraph for my book.

Another set of backbreaking scrapbooks at the British Library is the nine volumes that apparently constitute the house archives of the Surrey Zoological Gardens, an outdoor summer amusement place that flourished for the first thirty years of Victoria's reign not far from the better-remembered Vauxhall Gardens. In addition to the menagerie, it had a lake, flower gardens, a conservatory, and nightly displays of fireworks against the background of Brobdingnagian wood-and-canvas "picture models" representing such locales as London in the fire of 1666 and Rome at festival time. I confess that my heart sank when those nine folios were dumped on my table in the North Library. If he is lucky, there are times in a scholar's life when he has feasted so long that a short interval of famine is welcome. In the event, I extracted from this *embarras de richesses* what I needed and left the rest, with its invaluable records of the gardens' business affairs, including deaths in

the menagerie and the fees Barnum charged for General Tom Thumb's nightly appearances, to some future historian of that popular Victorian enterprise.

I wish I could thank by name the man, perhaps a librarian late in Victoria's reign, who thoughtfully compiled another series of scrapbooks that chronicle, in clipping, print, playbill, and miscellaneous paste-ups, the sights and doings in the very center of Victorian London's amusement world, the parish of St. Martin in the Fields and particularly the perennially raffish and hectic neighborhood of Leicester Square. They are seemingly unknown to theatrical historians because they are not in the British Library or the Enthoven Collection but in the local history collection of the Westminster City Library in Buckingham Palace Road, opposite the west side of Victoria Station. One does not usually associate a metropolitan public library like this with academic research. Its chief purpose is to serve Londoners who need to use its reference books or draw current books for at-home reading. But researchers learn to adapt themselves to the nature and conditions of each library where there is a chance of finding pertinent material.

Sometimes, to squeeze the maximum benefit from libraries, regardless of their individual character, tricks of the trade are needed which are not described in books on the art of literary or historical research. It is not always easy, for example, to gain access to some English libraries. The British Library, to be sure, normally offers no difficulties. It requires only a perfunctory declaration that the work one proposes to do cannot be done elsewhere in London, followed by a Polaroid mug shot and the issuance of a reader's ticket. But other libraries are more reluctant to admit the American who comes in from the street without previous introduction. On such occasions, the art of chatting up the presiding functionary comes in handy. If a discreet employment of trans-Atlantic affability does not suffice, Providence may come to the rescue, as it once did for me when I was able to identify myself as the author of a book I opportunely spied on the librarian's select ready-reference shelf. In a pinch, another variety of one-upmanship may save the day. At one library, I could not gain access to certain

MANNERS AND CVSTOMS OF YE ENGLYSHE IN 1849 . No 11.

YE EXHYBITYON AT YE ROYAL ACADEMYE.

The first show of the Royal Academy was held in 1769. "Henceforth the annual Academy exhibition, held at Somerset House beginning in 1781, was the great event of the art year, as it also became one of the obligatory social events of the London season" (The Shows of London, p. 102). Illustration from Punch, or the London Charivari, vol. 16 (1849), p. 216.

material because for some unstated reason it was restricted to holders of an endorsed reader's card. I hadn't even a reader's card, let alone an endorsed one, whatever that was. But I quickly remembered that the head librarian was a scholar who had published articles in my own field of Victorian literature. "Oh, but I'm sure Mr. X would want me to see those books," I said, and before long I saw them.

Some members of a library staff are more pliable than others; if one attendant will not bend the rules for you, wait until somebody else is on duty. At that same library, I went to some

trouble to obtain by that method a typewritten manuscript which was for restricted use. This time, however, my wiles were wasted. When, after an interval, the girl—evidently a newcomer to the staff—returned from the stacks empty-handed, she had to admit that when she couldn't find the manuscript she appealed to higher authority and learned that the prefix "M" before the call number meant "Missing."

In some situations, calculated craftiness is plainly inappropriate and would not work anyway. At the British Museum, the Department of Manuscripts and the Department of Prints and Drawings own so much precious material that security must be maintained at a high level. The latter may not have closed-circuit surveillance, but it is a little disquieting to be aware of its equivalent, an official constantly overseeing the room from a chair at the rail of the surrounding gallery. At the other extreme, I know of an institution in central London (it had better be nameless) where, when I asked leave to look through its archives, no note was taken even of my name. I was led at once to a corner closet in the library, shown the large cardboard and metal boxes where the records were kept, and left alone. I could have departed with some irreplaceable manuscripts in my briefcase and nobody would have been the wiser.

Most English librarians, like their opposite numbers in the United States, are not only hospitable but, in general, knowledgeable. After all, it is their business to command a wide expanse of bibliographical, if not substantive, information to meet the diverse and often unpredictable requirements of their clientele. Sometimes, as is only to be expected, the visiting specialist knows a good deal more about his specialty than do the librarians. But at least a few men and women at London libraries are scholars in their own right, and they willingly place their expertise at the disposal of the visitor. I think with particular gratitude of the information and leads I got from the director of the Enthoven Collection and the keeper of prints and maps at the Guildhall Library.

In the absence of such helpful hosts, the scholar must do his own prospecting and digging. His bibliographical knowledge and the catalogs of the individual libraries may take him only so far; and, as was the case with sources for *The Shows of London*, some kinds of obscure and

ephemeral material, abundant though they may be, are either poorly cataloged or not cataloged at all. And so, sooner or later, systematic procedure must be abandoned in favor of freewheeling exploration. Above all, the scholar must somehow break down the barriers that separate him from the storehouse itself. In the British Library, access to the stacks is virtually impossible. Elsewhere, however, it is possible for a scholar who is patient and tactful to win freedom of the inner shelves. Between the London Library's reading room and the basement stacks are three flights of narrow iron stairs, negotiated with difficulty if one has an armload of books. But the frequent trips I made up and down every day were a small price to pay for the convenience of working methodically along the shelves and opening every book that might conceivably have something for me.

At the Westminster City Library, the whole local history collection is shelved in the very room where both the staff and the scholar, once he has found an empty space at one of the tables, work. In such circumstances, nothing prevents him from ranging the shelves—and the under-the-counter cases. It was under the counter, a lode unmentioned by any staff person, that I came upon those bountiful Leicester Square scrapbooks. Such serendipity is ample compensation for the noisy, cramped quarters where the scholar must performe work. And one's daily presence in the midst of busy staff going about their daily tasks can help break down whatever initial reserve they might have. Once assured of the visitor's serious purpose (and, as occasion permits, his intimate knowledge of a little sector of the field in which their collection specializes), they take an interest in his work and thus are more likely to toss him useful information than if he were separated from them.

When I finished gathering material for *The Shows of London*, I felt, with some confidence, that though there may well have been concealed references I still didn't know existed, they were few indeed, and someone else was welcome to discover them in my wake. As things turned out, I have been finding little chips of additional information ever since. But during those days and weeks in London libraries, I learned quite enough about London exhibitions to satisfy me and, I suspect, my readers as well.

A Passion for Excellence

A Conversation between Barbara Tuchman and William Meredith

MR. MEREDITH: *A number of my questions have developed from ideas you addressed in your lecture on "The Book" here at the Library last October. For those, I will invoke quotation. I'd like to start, however, with a couple of straight literary questions, between two nonlibrarians. The first is, how do you see the distinction between the creativity of a historian and that of other literary artists?*

MRS. TUCHMAN: I feel the creativity of a historian is somewhat more disciplined. It isn't entirely at the call of his own imagination. A historian has to work, to begin with, with verifiable facts, as far as he can find them, documented, if possible, or verifiable in some other way.

Then his creativity consists in assembling these and shaping them into a readable narrative—that

is, if his concern is with readership and communication. This is not so much the concern of the academic historian, whose job is to assemble facts and make them available. But the historian in my sense is concerned with telling a story to readers. I always feel I don't exist if I don't have readers.

My product has a double nature, so to speak. It doesn't exist until it is read. And if you want to be read, you must exercise your creativity, that is to say, your artistry in making your book, shaping your book, organizing it, making it interesting so that, as a colleague once said, the reader will turn the page.

MR. MEREDITH: *If there is a kind of historian who is not widely read, is that liable to be because the writing is not attractive enough or because he or she is*

William Meredith, a poet and professor of English at Connecticut College (1965-), was consultant in poetry at the Library of Congress from 1978 to 1980. His most recent book of poetry is *The Cheer*, published by Knopf in 1980. Others include *Hazard, the Painter* (1975), *Earth Walk: New and Selected Poems* (1970), *The Wreck of the Thresher and Other Poems* (1964), *The Open Sea and Other Poems* (1958), and *Letter from an Impossible Land* (1944). Besides writing his own poetry, he has also translated poems of Guillaume Apollinaire in the volume *Alcools* (1964).

Barbara Wertheim Tuchman, historian and author, is a winner of the Pulitzer Prize and of the Gold Medal for History of the American Academy of Arts and Letters. She has contributed articles to the *New York Times*, *American Heritage*, *Atlantic Monthly*, *Foreign Affairs*, and *Harper's*. Her books

include *A Distant Mirror: The Calamitous 14th Century* (1978), *Stilwell and the American Experience in China, 1911-45* (1970), *The Proud Tower* (1966), *The Guns of August* (1962), and *Bible and Sword* (1956).

This interview was commissioned by the Center for the Book in the Library of Congress and took place on January 31, 1980, at the Library of Congress. In his opening question, William Meredith refers to a lecture delivered by Barbara Tuchman on October 17, 1979, entitled "The Book" and sponsored by the Center for the Book in the Library of Congress and the Authors League of America. The published lecture, *The Book* (Library of Congress, 1980), is the first publication in the Center for the Book's Viewpoint Series.

working at a level that is not widely understandable?

MRS. TUCHMAN: Well, I think it's both, and I also think it has a lot to do with the subject. I feel strongly that if you have a subject that has both relevance and interest, you have half your battle won. Then you have to be working, as you say, on a level that communicates to a reading public. You have to write in a way that attracts and keeps up interest, that has some charm of its own in the language and the wording and in clarity.

If you're only concerned with making available a set of facts, which is one of the difficulties an academic historian faces, you may not spend time on the writing itself. The academic historian writes for a built-in audience, his academic sponsor. He doesn't have to think in terms of readers putting down their money and buying his book. Because he is trained in writing a thesis, he is not concerned primarily with the artistry of prose, which is a very great art. I don't say that's a fault, but it is a difference.

MR. MEREDITH: *Yes, I think there's been a lot of history that's been written as though it were not a high form of literature but an urgent form of communicating new data.*

MRS. TUCHMAN: That's right. But that's valid, it has a validity, that purpose. History as a form of literature has a different purpose. I think that purpose was more pursued in the nineteenth century, when the greatest historians were not academics. I suppose the greatest writer among American historians was Francis Parkman, who wrote beautifully. And of course the great English historians of the past, like Gibbon and Macaulay, were great literary artists.

MR. MEREDITH: *It's interesting to me that just during my membership in the National Institute of Arts and Letters, two of the presidents have been historians—you and George Kennan. And this in the field of all the arts.*

MRS. TUCHMAN: It is interesting. Perhaps it's because we're more connected with the real world than the so-called purely creative artist. I don't know.

MR. MEREDITH: *Another question: What do you feel is happening to the public libraries at the moment, from the point of view of scholars and artists?*

MRS. TUCHMAN: Well, I suppose you mean literary artists, and your question reminds me of one of my concerns regarding libraries, which is

There are some books that require the reader to reach, to stand on tiptoe, as it were, to read them. There are others that do not necessarily have to make one think to be worth reading and enjoyable. [Sir Walter] Scott's were unquestionably both, for their story, their vivid scenes, and their reconstruction of history as a living past. They pleased all ranks and classes of men, acknowledged Thomas Love Peacock. When each new Waverley novel appeared, he wrote, "the scholar lays aside his Plato, the statesman suspends his calculation the young lady deserts her [embroidery] hoop, the critic smiles as he trims his lamp, and the weary artisan resigns his sleep for the refreshment of the magic page." What writer could ask for more? "The refreshment of the magic page" condenses in six words all that I am talking about; it should be the motto carved over some appropriate doorway. . . .

—Barbara Tuchman
The Book, p. 21



William Meredith and Barbara Tuchman converse in the Poetry Office at the Library of Congress on January 31, 1980.

the necessity as I see it for any library to have a quiet study area. This is becoming more and more essential, because libraries now are going in for box office. In order to get public support, they're trying to get as many people coming in at the door as they can and they're not concerned with silence as they used to be.

I spoke about that at a library conference in Connecticut and asked one librarian if we couldn't at least have a room where you put a big sign over the door saying SILENCE, the way they do in an English club. She looked at me and she said, "Oh, we couldn't do that!" As if this was the last thing in the world.

But apart from attracting people to come in and have a nice place to stay and read paperbacks and find information, as they call it, a library from the point of view of a scholar is a very necessary place to find the material with which you wish to work. And you can't do that if

you're totally surrounded by teenagers whispering and people coming and going and telephones ringing and all sorts of things going on.

I think that this emphasis lately on making a library a kind of community center, while it's admirable from the point of view of introducing more people to books—

I believe that quality always bubbles up somewhere, that true writers will always be born and will create, even if the contemporary welcome is discouraging.

—Barbara Tuchman
The Book, p. 26

MR. MEREDITH: *Once they're introduced, they want to be left alone together.*

MRS. TUCHMAN: Well, at least for someone who comes in for studying purposes. It's deplorable, because there's no place to study, no place to put your books down, except in a university library. But in a public library, it is hard to find a study area. In Greenwich, where I am, I finally had to make a donation for this purpose. There had been many requests for such space, but no one paid any attention.

MR. MEREDITH: *Well, this is a time when space is the most expensive commodity for a library, and all these new demands for public rooms have taken the space of a small library. I don't know the one at Greenwich, but I know in many small towns there isn't room for both the communal activity and the reading activity. And the reading activity gets squeezed out.*

MRS. TUCHMAN: I think this also has to do with the current fear of elitism, because the students who want to be left alone are not the public that librarians are oriented toward anymore. They want the populace, they want as many people as they can attract. And they want them all buzzing around the library, and they want them to be able to say to the trustees or the friends of the library that there were eighteen thousand users last week or last year, whatever it is.

And that's the goal. Everyone using the library, and as much as possible.

MR. MEREDITH: *And using often consists of coming in and finding something and Xeroxing it and taking it home so you can work with it, because you can't work there.*

MRS. TUCHMAN: You can't work there.

MR. MEREDITH: *I think Xeroxing is a curious evasion of the process of selectivity. At least it is for me.*

MRS. TUCHMAN: Oh, yes.

MR. MEREDITH: *I go and copy the whole article, instead of finding the three sentences that I'm after.*

MRS. TUCHMAN: And the process of taking notes by hand, anyway, I think, helps your mental activity. Whereas when you Xerox, you're not doing anything.

MR. MEREDITH: *It's a little like watching television.*

MRS. TUCHMAN: Nothing is entering your head at all. You're not doing any thinking or selecting your material. The great thing about a

library is, you read a book and that gives you an idea of something else, and you want to go to the shelves and get something else. And that leads you to the third thing. Or you see a reference and follow it.

But if you have to take a book home, it means another trip to pursue these things, which is an awful waste of time. Libraries have to be popular in order to get municipal support, but I think they ought to concern themselves with the real users, to some extent—having a place for the teenagers and the populace, but also having a place for the serious users. You can't ignore students and scholars; in the long run they're important too.

MR. MEREDITH: *You said last October in your talk that in "a society conditioned by mass entertainment," the specter is vulgarization—"reducing all values in art to the level of the most popular." How effective do you think the libraries are as a defense against this kind of vulgarization?*

To recognize the place of books in our race memory, one must include the characters whom we are born knowing, so to speak; whom the great writers have created as the personification of a concept or an aspect of mankind, or simply as the focus of an immortal story.

Among them are Don Quixote, Robinson Crusoe, Gulliver, Candide, Becky Sharp, Madame Bovary, Tom Sawyer and Huck Finn, Alice in Wonderland, Sherlock Holmes. . . . Each of us can fill the remaining shelves with his or her own nominees. I with Jane Austen, Chekhov, Dostoyevsky, *Treasure Island*, *The Three Musketeers*, *The Just So Stories*, and for perfection of language, *The Importance of Being Ernest.*"

—Barbara Tuchman
The Book, p. 17

MRS. TUCHMAN: I think they're immensely important as a defense. I don't know how effective they are, but certainly the library is the source where one can go and find the higher quality of books and other materials, so that one isn't reduced only to the mass paperback, to books produced for mass appeal, I mean.

I think the library is an essential resource for those who wish to escape the vulgarization. You can find the whole record of literature there, and you can select what you want. The person who is trying to find something of greater value to read can find it there, even if he has no access to a bookstore or can't find it in a bookstore.

It seems to me that the library is the last, best hope of man, in a sense. Without libraries we'd simply be victims of the vulgarization. We'd have no recourse.

MR. MEREDITH: *Partly, their effectiveness depends on teaching people how to use them at a young age. I think any young person of taste can defend himself against the mass culture, in a public library, if he knows how to operate it.*

MRS. TUCHMAN: It's a puzzle to me what you have to know. I remember when I was a little girl, we lived on Sixty-third Street in New York City and there was a branch of the public library at Fifty-eighth. It's still there, but it's now the music library, or part of it, between Lexington and Park. I think it has a name now, but in those days it was just the Fifty-eighth Street library.

And I used to go there two or three afternoons a week after school. Nobody ever taught me what to do, it was just obvious. You went to the shelves and you picked out a book. And I don't quite understand now why people find it so puzzling, how to use the library.

MR. MEREDITH: *With closed stacks, and I suppose some—*

MRS. TUCHMAN: Oh, with closed stacks, yes.

MR. MEREDITH: *There is something about card catalog use. It's very important. At a good college like the one I teach at in Connecticut, we make a point of assuming that the freshmen are too shy to ask, and we tell them how to find a book.*

MRS. TUCHMAN: I know this is necessary. I know at Harvard, where I'm on the visiting committee for libraries, they want to have a course to tell freshmen how to use a library. Now, if you're a freshman at Harvard, it seems to me presumably you ought to know.

MR. MEREDITH: *Or you could be reminded in an hour of all you ought to know. But there seems to be something abashing about just the use of the card catalog to some students that I've watched. I watch them come back and say they can't find something. It's a kind of gun-shyness in the presence of all that learning, I think.*

MRS. TUCHMAN: Really? Strikes me as odd, but I know it's there, because everybody says it's there. I can't quite see why. Maybe because students never go in a library while they're at school. They spend all their spare time in front of the box.

Books had the power to transport a reader to another time and place, and certain books could so deeply involve him that he felt himself engaged in their events. Richardson's *Pamela*, rather in-exactly called the first English novel, was one of these. Published in 1740, its tale of seduction resisted and villainy thwarted by innocence absorbed virtually everyone who could read, in America and France no less than in England.

—Barbara Tuchman
The Book, p. 19

MR. MEREDITH: *The libraries themselves are potentially a correction to any form of standardization, because there exist all the separate citizens of the world of the mind. In their infinite differences.*

MRS. TUCHMAN: Yes, that's right.

MR. MEREDITH: *Are there any limits to a historian's objectivity? In your treatment of fourteenth-century Europe, did you take a twentieth-century attitude toward religious faith?*

MRS. TUCHMAN: Well, I think that willy-nilly I did, or perhaps it was not so much that I took a twentieth-century attitude as that my mind was conditioned by my own failure to understand religion or to relate to the religious spirit. I was very conscious of being unable to

feel any affinity to the medieval religious spirit or to get inside it at all. And I think this—the basis of your question is very fundamental—that there are limits to objectivity because one simply cannot shed the attitudes of one's period.

You can do it consciously, if you really try. I feel very strongly that one should see events through the eyes of the people about whom one is writing. I know that I failed on that with religion, but at least I was aware of it. And I think that too many historians look at their subject through their own eyes. Every time there's a revisionist school, it's obvious they're looking at the old events from the point of view of a new period, from the point of view of their present period. That's what revisionism is, I guess.

And that's why it seems to me there really isn't much point in it. Because what you want to do is get closer and closer to the point of view of the people of the time. Events were seen in a certain way by them, and that was what influenced the way things turned out.

For example, if you take Communism in China. When I was doing *Stilwell*, I discovered (of course I was only reading English-language and foreign points of view) that the people who were writing about events in China in the thirties didn't take the Communists seriously at all. If they had, the results might have been different. But today many historians writing about that period emphasize the Communist movement and the Long March and Mao Tse-tung and all that, making of them far more than was apparent to people at the time.

Taking the *ex post facto* point of view changes your account of what happened. I haven't described that very accurately, but—take the whole feminist movement of today. Feminist historians regard every woman of the past as oppressed and miserable and terribly stepped on. But many women in the past were reasonably content, because they didn't know anything else. Only you wouldn't get that point of view if you read the women's movement historians of today, because they're looking at it with a very fixed point of view, and they're not putting themselves into the position of the people they're writing about.

MR. MEREDITH: You spoke about judging Jefferson as a racist. Actually what's quite moving about the early drafts of the Declaration of Independence is with what reluctance Jefferson realized the art of the

possible. He would have liked to have brought the issue of slavery into the Declaration and accused the king of England of having abetted that trade. But I think that the tragic results of the failure to address ourselves to slavery in 1776 can't revise the essential integrity and honesty of the people who made that mistake.

MRS. TUCHMAN: We mustn't write about them from our point of view, because it's unhistorical. It isn't the way things were.

MR. MEREDITH: We have our own political differences which we can't expect Tom Paine and Alexander Hamilton to solve for us.

MRS. TUCHMAN: Right, that's true enough.

Historic power lies in the book that by the force of its ideas moves men to action or so alters the climate of thought as to become itself a factor of history. Locke's *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, opening the gate from the old regime into the modern world of political democracy and ultimately creating the American constitution, was such a factor.

—Barbara Tuchman
The Book, p. 20

MR. MEREDITH: You said in your lecture there are some books that require the reader to reach, to stand on tiptoe, as it were, to read them. Would you name some of the books that have made that demand of you?

MRS. TUCHMAN: Well, it would be a book like *The Brothers Karamazov*, for example—that certainly makes a lot of demands on you. Many of the ones that make demands you never get through.

MR. MEREDITH: It's wonderful that you said that. Books you mean to go back to. I was defeated the first time by Lewis Thomas's *Lives of a Cell*. I'm glad that I knew I wanted to go back to it.

MRS. TUCHMAN: Unfortunately a lot of these one would want to go back to if one had

days stretching before one with time for reading. But my problem is, I don't seem to have it. Being a puritan type, I tend to think that one shouldn't read for pleasure during the daytime. By the time I get comfortable with a book at night, I go to sleep. At least, in my old age now. I think most of my useful reading—or, not useful, but the reading that framed or shaped my mind—was done between roughly my sixth and sixteenth year. That's when I just gobbled up everything.

MR. MEREDITH: *In other words, a lot of those books were fiction. Were they making you reach in moral ways and intellectual ways?*

MRS. TUCHMAN: Yes, I think so. I think *Vanity Fair* made a big impression on my mind. I don't know just why, or whether I had to stand on tiptoe to read that. It seemed to read fairly easily. I'm trying to think now, but I don't think quickly offhand. Books I've tried recently all go out of my head, right off.

MR. MEREDITH: *Some of the hard ones for me are political. I find politics terribly abstract. History is the way I want my politics.*

MRS. TUCHMAN: Oh, I can't read what I call think-books or abstract books at all. All my life I've had a difficulty with abstract ideas. I can't read philosophers. I can't read Locke and Hume and Spinoza, people like that. I can't read Emerson, who's supposed to be the epitome of what one should read in America, what America wants to read for philosophy. But I find that's beyond me.

I think that the books one has to stand on tiptoe to read may be different for each person.

MR. MEREDITH: *Here's another question. You have described yourself as an elitist, by which I take you to mean nothing better or worse than having a preference for excellence. Robert Frost used to speak of a passionate preference. Would you like to say something about how frequently elitists get misunderstood, willfully or otherwise?*

MRS. TUCHMAN: Yes, I would, because I think there is a very deep and usually deliberate misunderstanding of this word. Clearly, you're quite right that what I mean by elitist is a passion for excellence. And this goes through all of our life. What else are school marks? If you get an A presumably you are better than if you get a C or an E or F.

That's recognition that some people are better than others in that particular sphere. We cer-

tainly don't fail to recognize that—that people have different capacities and abilities, and some are capable of better effort, greater care, more excellent results than others. And nobody has ever, at least until lately, shied away from recognizing that by such things as marks and grades and prizes.

MR. MEREDITH: *I think teachers still do it, though, absolutely accurately in the French schools. If you're in a class of 18, it's possible for you to be graded 16th. And I think that specific ranking probably does more good than harm.*

MRS. TUCHMAN: I think one wants recognition, one wants the sense of achievement and especially achievement recognized by others. That's what I mean by elitists, both in measurable achievement and in the arts where it's not so measurable but where the quality can be felt or seen.

I see absolutely no reason not to recognize that some things, some people, some works are better than others. Now, the misunderstanding comes with those people who mindlessly assume that when you say elitist, you mean unearned privilege, which is not what we mean. That clearly is out of date. That's gone, nobody is talking about that. But people pretend that's what you mean.

MR. MEREDITH: *People assume there's something undemocratic about excellence itself.*

MRS. TUCHMAN: Exactly. They also think you mean class privilege, wealth, comfort, upper-classness, unearned or inherited. When I use the word, it's necessary to explain that that isn't what is meant. But beyond that, there's a very serious and deplorable attitude nowadays that being equal is better than being excellent. The very fact of someone excelling someone else is unacceptable to the egalitarians. There are even movements now to eliminate grades in school because that puts some above others.

I suppose this is all a movement coming up from below, representing the whole surge of what I might call the Third World idea. I'm not now referring to the nations who are Third World, but the whole movement that represents—what shall I call it—the underprivileged and the masses and holds that in order for them to have their rights, they mustn't be seen as less capable than anyone else. So therefore, you mustn't distinguish, and any distinction is pejorative.

MR. MEREDITH: *This is another quotation from your lecture: "Because the book is written by an individual, . . . because it is conceived by a single mind and single volition, it will always be different in some way from received doctrine and will always remain the voice of the individual which, as I see it, is the voice of freedom." Would you like to comment on this in the light of censorship in the United States or elsewhere?*

MRS. TUCHMAN: Well, I've never felt the force of censorship myself in the USA. I think that locally here and there it does exist. You read about library boards forbidding such-and-such a book to be out on the shelves or about censorship of textbooks and that kind of thing. And it must be guarded against, one must be alert for it, certainly.

But I think America on the whole is freer of this than any other country in the world. It is certainly an overpowering problem in the totalitarian countries and in the developing countries, as they're called, where there hasn't been time for a democratic education and probably as things are going now there never will be, with the result that you get the governments of India or Iran or Russia or any of the Iron Curtain countries deciding what will be published and what people may read and what people may see and what people may say.

But the individual is still free to say what he wants and to read what he wants in the United States, which is why I'd rather live here than anywhere else. Because that's the most important thing in life (apart, that is, from personal life), the freedom of individual choice, the right to make your own decisions.

Life without that, to me, wouldn't be worth living. I could feel it in China, even though I couldn't speak the language, just traveling around China for six weeks. After a while the effect was like living under a blanket. You could see it in the posters—and the translated material. The slogan-thinking. Terrible.

MR. MEREDITH: *I think the people who are most concerned about liberty in this country feel that it's inhibited by social and economic conditions, that there are potentially excellent minds and potentially excellent human beings who are not given opportunities or models during the first twenty years of their lives. That seems to be about the most serious charge leveled against freedom in this country. Compared to the other ones abroad, it's certainly very much less deliberate.*

MRS. TUCHMAN: Well, that's a condition of being underprivileged, which one hopes can be mitigated. But if you're going to have a society in which privileges exist, whether they're financial or social or a combination, whatever they are, you're going to have underprivileged people. Not everybody is going to have the same advantages. The disadvantaged don't have the opportunities—that's what being disadvantaged is.

And perhaps—well, there are a great many efforts to rectify this situation, the scholarship programs and Head Start and Reach Out and many programs of that kind. I don't know how effective they are. There are such vast cultural differences in American people, because we are such a mixture.

Without books, history is silent, literature dumb, science crippled, thought and speculation at a standstill. Without books, the development of civilization would have been impossible. They are engines of change, windows on the world, and (as a poet has said) "light-houses erected in the sea of time." They are companions, teachers, magicians, bankers of the treasures of the mind.

—Barbara Tuchman
The Book, p. 13

MR. MEREDITH: *The movement to ameliorate these disadvantages and to make assertions for the cultures which were previously considered subcultures is where I think the cry against elitism comes from. And I think it's a false alternative. I think all excellence should be available in all cultures to all members of the American community. And we are neglectful of the economic inequities in this country, and that's very serious. That's something that I suppose our excellence should call more attention to.*

But it's a false alternative to suggest that we should remedy these economic and educational and cultural deficiencies at the expense of any excellence that exists. It should be accomplished in the spirit of excellence.

MRS. TUCHMAN: Well, for example, the essence of that is the whole issue of the quotas. When you try to remedy the disadvantages suffered by the blacks as a result of slavery by giving them special access to opportunity, you establish these quotas. The fire departments, for example, in Connecticut, in Westchester, are having a terrible time now. The law says they must have 20 percent blacks, and they can't get applicants who can pass the exams. And if they give them a special support and training to take these positions, isn't that at the cost of the better-prepared people? But should we do it anyway?

This whole issue of quotas—the Bakke case, and this one that came after it, I forget what it's called—I can't make up my mind about that. I really don't know what's right. I'm against quotas and yet on the other hand I think the only way we can ameliorate this problem of the underprivileged is to lean over backward, to make special efforts. But, of course, that will be at the expense of others. I don't know.

MR. MEREDITH: *The fact that you are here as a member of the executive board for the Center for the Book and are president of the American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters suggests that you feel that your work includes social responsibility. Would you speak about that?*

MRS. TUCHMAN: Well, I'm not so sure it's entirely voluntary. It comes mainly because if you make a success of any kind of endeavor, everybody immediately latches onto you and appoints you to this, that, and the other thing. It's very difficult to say no, because one is ambivalent. One likes going to these various boards and meetings and conferences and meeting interesting and thoughtful people like you and like the members of the Center for the Book executive board. At the same time, such activities interfere with one's own work. I do it partly from social responsibility, from a sense of duty, and partly because I can't help it—because, as my daughter says, I don't know how to say no on the telephone. But my real feeling of social responsibility is concerned with writing books, because that's what I feel I can do and that's what I know how to do. If I have any sense of social responsibility, it's simply in doing what I can do best.

MR. MEREDITH: *Certainly the Center for the*

Book is interested in things that you're interested in doing.

MRS. TUCHMAN: Yes, yes. I come here because it's very closely concerned with my own profession, as is the Authors League. I serve on that, too, because I am concerned with the conditions that affect authors. And I am naturally concerned with the future or the survival of the book, which is why I'm here in this organization.

But when it comes to personal drive, a personal sense of responsibility, that's mainly for my own work. Which may be rather selfish, but I think I have to admit to that.

MR. MEREDITH: *I think one gets drawn out of one's own work, certainly, by attractive and ego-soothing appointments. But also I find that I sometimes do jobs because I think either they won't get done if I don't do them, or that they'll get done even worse than I'll do them.*

MRS. TUCHMAN: Less well, yes, that's true. The kudos nowadays are hard to resist—like being president of the academy. It sounds wonderful; you can put it in your obit. I should do it, I think, but I don't feel it's my dish.

MR. MEREDITH: *Does your correspondence about your writing confirm to you that that's where you belong?*

MRS. TUCHMAN: Yes, yes. People do in the most extraordinary way keep writing me. I don't mean to sound conceited, but I keep getting letters from people who say, "This book has given me so much pleasure and I read it three times and I read it aloud with my husband or wife." "I spent twelve days in the hospital, sustained by *A Distant Mirror*," someone said to me the other day. Or they read it on the beach while taking a vacation. I keep getting these, and it's very gratifying because you know you're giving satisfaction.

MR. MEREDITH: *I think that the highest accolade that a historian or a poet can get is for someone to say, "Your book gave me pleasure." All the other things one can suspect, but—*

MRS. TUCHMAN: That's right, it's wonderful to know you're reaching somebody and giving them what you set out to do. That it's working.

MR. MEREDITH: Yes.

MRS. TUCHMAN: To the extent that they feel moved to write you.

MR. MEREDITH: *The best thing you've said here, in terms of heartening me, is about the books that*

made you stand on tiptoe. Because those books where I still couldn't see over the top, I don't ever forgive or forget. I'm going to go back to those books, I think.

MRS. TUCHMAN: Yes. Perhaps someday I'll even go back to *Moby Dick*.

MR. MEREDITH: *I had a wonderful experience with Moby Dick. I read it at Princeton with Willard Thorp, the great American literature scholar. And everybody else was sort of having trouble with it, and Willard and I had a rather splendid discussion of the movement of the book. Other students talked about the longueurs of certain chapters. And what I was reading was the Howard Pyle illustrated fourteen-year-old's reduction of Moby Dick, which I'd never read before. I'm afraid that did that novel a great service, that child's version of it, for me.*

MRS. TUCHMAN: Just like Gulliver. You really can't read Gulliver in the original, at least when you're young. Those condensed versions, adapted versions, sometimes are very useful.

MR. MEREDITH: *But this so shocked me as a junior at Princeton that I have never told a soul.*

MRS. TUCHMAN: Well, there are those books that one can't read in our time in the entire original, like *Don Quixote*.

MR. MEREDITH: *You're probably not a very fast reader.*

MRS. TUCHMAN: No, I'm not. I'm a slow reader.

MR. MEREDITH: *I equate that with quality, although I'm told we're wrong. People who read fast read just as well as we do.*

MRS. TUCHMAN: I don't know about reading fast, but that whole speed-reading program where you're supposed to let your eyes go right down the middle of the page and not go horizontal or read a whole sentence—I find that absolutely reprehensible.

MR. MEREDITH: *Well, they keep saying they only mean it for factual reading, as though all reading weren't factual, that you could read nonsense in the paper that way.*

MRS. TUCHMAN: Well, I don't know. If I were dictator and wanted to outlaw anything, speed-reading would be the first thing, I think, because it destroys any sense of prose, rhythm, or structure. As a writer, I wouldn't want any-

body to read my stuff down the middle of the page.

MR. MEREDITH: *I think it's a bad idea, especially the fact that they disguise it by saying, well, this is only meant for material that you have to cover. Mostly that's all anybody reads, so they won't develop a taste for good prose.*

MRS. TUCHMAN: Maybe this has something to do with the inability nowadays to write a decent sentence. Many people may have been taught this stuff.

MR. MEREDITH: *They've never heard a sentence.*

MRS. TUCHMAN: They have never heard it, so they have no sense of structure at all.

MR. MEREDITH: *Yes.*

MRS. TUCHMAN: I have a book right here in my bag that should never have been published. It is absolutely incredible, written by some man called a research professor of English, whatever that is. He cannot write the language at all. Not even grammatically. It's really weird. For instance, read this sentence. Does that make any sense to you at all?

MR. MEREDITH: *No. Well, perhaps that's what happens if you become a research professor of English.*

The point of literature . . . is not to cut gems of flashing and exquisite rarity but to communicate, to convey a meaning, an art, a story, a fantasy, even a mystery, to someone. The writer must have a reader as the yin must have a yang. Literature does not exist in a vacuum; indeed, if it is not read, like music without listeners, it cannot be said to exist at all.

—Barbara Tuchman
The Book, p. 28

Confessions of a Biographer

by Ernest Samuels

My title obviously takes in too much territory. I should have added a qualifier—Confessions of a Scholarly Biographer. On second—or third—thought perhaps I ought to add the further qualification—amateur. Not that I haven't spent sufficiently long years at the art or craft but that I have involved myself with only two principal figures—Henry Adams and Bernard Berenson—and lavished three volumes alone on Adams and will need another one to lay Berenson to rest.

When I think of Irving Stone's fourteen or more biographical novels or novelized biographies I feel a little inadequate. Yet I suppose that the scholar turned biographer does have a defense for his seeming sloth. In academia his researches proceed in disregard of deadlines and the calendar itself. Scale and economy are not

first considerations as long as there are university presses that are sympathetic and accustomed to deficit financing.

When I completed *The Young Henry Adams* in 1948, six years after I began it, and was persuaded by the editor of the Harvard Press to continue, I had no idea how long the sequel would be or how long it would take. Research and writing went on by fits and starts, during weekends, summers, and a year's leave of absence from full time teaching at Northwestern University. Six years hurried by and volume 2 appeared, and then another ten before volume 3 (double in size of the first) saw the light in 1964.

My track record on Bernard Berenson hasn't been much better. Research began in 1967 while I was still teaching. There followed interruptions for other writing and editing of *The Education of Henry Adams* with its monumental annotations and there flew by another twelve years, years in which a multivolume edition of the letters of Henry Adams was also undertaken. As an aging professor of literature, I do not think my experience has been unique. Like Art, scholarship is long, and life is short. The hunt for evidence, for truth, demands a passion for accuracy and an infinity of patience. The scholar must deny himself the pleasure of his prejudices or the convenience of journalistic speculation, for, to paraphrase James Russell Lowell, he knows that

Truth [is] forever on the scaffold,
Error [is] forever on the throne.

Ernest Samuels was professor of English at Northwestern University from 1942 until 1971. He received the Pulitzer Prize in biography in 1965 for his three-volume work on Henry Adams: *The Young Henry Adams* (1948), *Henry Adams: The Middle Years* (1958), and *Henry Adams: The Major Phase* (1964). He is also the author of *Bernard Berenson: The Making of a Connoisseur* (1979). Professor Samuels was a member of the Library's Council of Scholars for the year 1979-80. This lecture was sponsored by the council and delivered at the Library of Congress on April 2, 1980.

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The scrupulous biographer must try to impose a rational order on the chaos of incidents which form the continuum of daily existence. The inner and outer life of an individual is an ever-changing kaleidoscope of bits of experience; the patterns are ever-changing. And if undistracted by a facile thesis or two, one seeks to trace out the growing personality, to piece together the elements that are truly representative of the life and career. What distinguishes the scholar-writer from the journalistic debunkers who research as they run is that he is honor bound to avoid over-emphasis on the sensational, the scandalous, and the prurient. I gather from the reviews that the author of *Jackie Oh!* did not have her typewriter hobbled by any such restraint—nor did the author of *The Boston Strangler*, nor the author of *The Badge of Madness: The True Story of a Psychotic Cop*, nor the fearless author of *Who's Afraid of Elizabeth Taylor*. The key to such epics of biography seems to be: When in doubt insinuate.

Even for the academic writer the genre of biography is as varied as the novel. The themes and structures that my former colleague Richard Ellmann employed in his masterly biography of James Joyce are intimately related to Joyce's fiction, and the narrative and the fiction have a contrapuntal character. Joseph Lash's sympathetic study of Eleanor Roosevelt necessarily focuses much on the public figure whose writing was incidental in her career. The multiple facets of Berenson's life resisted straightforward chronology, so that the narrative tends to move on parallel and alternating lines somewhat like a Trollopian novel.

I have touched on these various considerations by way of preface in order to suggest that biography, like heaven, has many mansions and that what holds good for one writer or one subject or one publisher will not hold good for others. And what any biographer may say of his own practice and theory—if he has one—must remain a personal statement, even a kind of autobiography.

Being preoccupied for many years with the life of Bernard Berenson, I tend to forget that his remarkable career does not similarly fill the minds of others. For most persons, I suspect he exists, if at all, on the periphery of awareness. Wasn't there something about him in the *New Yorker* by Sam Behrman long ago in connection with Duveen? Indeed vagueness was all for me



Henry Adams, "from a sketch made by Samuel Laurence, 1868, in the possession of Mr. Evelyn Milnes Gaskell."

when I first encountered his name in my research on Henry Adams. I had not then read his extraordinary piece of soul-searching, *Sketch for a Self-Portrait*, and was quite unaware of the shelf of books which bore Berenson's name. First came those two moving volumes drawn from the diaries of his old age—*Rumor and Reflection* and *Sunset and Twilight*. These books were to lead me backward, so to speak, through *The Arch of Constantine*, to *Aesthetics and History*, to the monumental *Drawings of the Florentine Painters*, and finally to the four small volumes on the painters of the Italian Renaissance which for two generations of art students have been the companions of their studies. Appended to each of the volumes was a list of attributions and the locations where he had found the paintings. The revision and enlargement of those lists became his and



Bernard Berenson, about 1887. The Moulton Collection, Prints and Photographs Division.

his wife's lifelong hobby. In the final reissue of these volumes, published after his death in 1959, the lists and accompanying illustrations had become an immense inventory of the world's holdings of Italian Renaissance paintings. Along the way, of course, there were numerous other writings, many of which were gathered into three volumes of essays.

I was to learn also that Bernard Berenson became the supreme arbiter of Italian Renaissance art in the first half of this century and that his villa, I Tatti, on the eastern edge of Florence housed one of the greatest private art libraries in Europe. His villa had long been a rendezvous for writers, art historians, collectors, political leaders, and social lions. I discovered that largely through his efforts and influence Italian Renaissance art formed an essential part of every major museum on the American continent. He could fairly claim that most of the Italian paintings in American collections bore his visa on their passports.

In 1955, on his ninetieth birthday, he was the object of a worldwide outpouring of tributes for his contributions to the study and appreciation of classical art and for his influence as a

humanist. The Sorbonne and other universities had already awarded him honorary degrees and the national academies here and abroad enrolled him in their pantheons.

I read that he had grown wealthy in the service of American collectors of art and as the highly paid expert for art dealers like Colnaghi, Duveen, Gimpel, Kleinberger, and Wildenstein. Hundreds of articles and essays told of his discoveries and exploits in the world of art, of his influence upon taste and—with sorrow—of his hostility to nonobjective art. Visitors, charmed by the conversation and ceremony at I Tatti, declared that Berenson had made his own life a work of art.

All this and much more I was to learn as I delved into the voluminous record, but as in the case of Henry Adams I was especially challenged to study the formative years of this astonishing and complex personality.

The question I am most often asked—especially by readers who skipped over the preface of my book—is, how did I come to do a book on the expatriate art critic Berenson after having spent three volumes on that quintessential American, the Boston-born Henry Adams? Berenson's activities seemed so remote from what had occupied me at my university, namely, American literature. The explanation, I am obliged to admit, was like the source of much scholarship, pure happenstance.

While rummaging in the stacks of the Massachusetts Historical Society for material for my second Henry Adams volume, I discovered that Adams and Berenson had become friends in the early years of the century. They saw much of each other and exchanged many letters. Although a whole generation separated them they met easily on common intellectual ground. They were fellow Harvard graduates.

Berenson met Adams late in 1903 at Adams's home in Lafayette Square. Adams was then sixty-five and Berenson was nearing thirty-nine. Their first meeting was rather frosty, for Adams disliked Jews—at least in the abstract. Yet it was not long before these two highly intellectual aesthetes became friendly allies. Adams confided to Henry James, "As usual I got more active information from Berenson than from all the rest." Their paths crossed again and again in pre-World War I Paris as members of Edith

Wharton's exclusive circle, and Berenson was a welcome guest in Lafayette Square on a return visit to Washington.

The Henry Adams Papers in Boston yielded forty-one letters from Berenson. Of course, twenty-odd years ago when I found them I was primarily interested in reading Adams's letters to Berenson. I wrote to the aged Berenson—he was then ninety-one—in quest of the Adams letters. He had transcripts made of them and at the same time urged me to come to I Tatti to talk with him about his friend of yesteryear while, as he put it, "there was still time." I leaped at the chance—once I learned that the president of my university would pay my expenses. As a Guggenheim Fellow I was already on leave. Within two weeks I had my passport in hand and typhoid, paratyphoid, typhus, and smallpox inoculations in their appropriate places. By late January, 1956, I was aboard the Queen Elizabeth when it headed out to sea.

Half gales pursued us all the way across the Atlantic. Even on the topmost deck of the colossal ship one could taste the salt spray as the great liner rose and fell in the tremendous winter seas. Luckily my digestion made no protest and the wild spectacle was a daily thrill. Jetting to Europe now above the clouds seems a pitiful substitute.

During the two weeks I spent in icebound Florence, Berenson talked of Henry Adams and their friends of the belle époque. I was struck by the resemblance that old age had brought to the profiles of the two men. There was the same high bald forehead, the deepset eyes, the sharp classical nose, and the trimly bearded chin. What impressed me most about the old man was his penetrating curiosity about the distracted world whose echoes came to his bedside. During those meetings with him I became acquainted with Nicky Mariano, his companion and alter ego for forty years. In that meeting with her, though neither of us could then foresee it, lay the origin of my book on Berenson.

Eight years later, the success of the Henry Adams volumes led Nicky, who had then become Berenson's literary executor, to urge me to write his biography. There would be no strings attached, no oversight of my research or writing. I would have my own key to the archives, a treasure house of letters from more

than twelve hundred correspondents and of masses of untouched papers. As it turned out the only person who scrutinized my manuscript before it was delivered to the Harvard Press was my wife, who had worked alongside me every day at I Tatti. Working summer after summer and for a year in 1972-73 among the journals and jumbled piles of manuscripts and memorabilia was like geologizing on the terminal moraine of a retreating glacier.

Perhaps it was an advantage that I was not trained as an art historian; for as a result I entered the world of Italian Renaissance art somewhat as a pupil of Berenson and relived in a very small way his own initiation. His career posed challenge after challenge. How did the boy, born of Jewish parents in a village of Lithuania and brought up in a North Boston ghetto, become the master art connoisseur of his age? What in his environment transformed him? What chain of events brought him to the top—and at what expense of spirit?

From Florence as a base of operations the search took us through much of Europe and America. We followed his art-haunted eye to Athens and Palermo, Naples and Rome, and the art cities of Umbria, Tuscany, the Marches, and Venetia. The trail led on to Vienna, Munich, and Berlin, to Holland and Belgium, to the Louvre in Paris and the Prado in Madrid. One followed him to school at the National Gallery in London and hunted for traces among the art dealers of Old Bond Street.

The record of their own ceaseless journeys filled the letters of Bernard Berenson and his wife, Mary. In their frequent absences from each other they exchanged more than six thousand letters. As I read Mary Berenson's uninhibited comments on herself and her husband I was put in mind of Robert Louis Stevenson's remark: "To marry is to domesticate the recording angel." The flood of letters from their far-flung correspondents acquainted me with a cosmopolitan world of talent and luxury—and eccentricity—whose like will not be seen again. The cast of characters multiplied through the years in a turbulent stream. Afloat on that eddying current I embarked on *The Making of a Connoisseur*.

Sometimes I am asked what I really think of Berenson, about whom so much rumor and gos-

sip have grown up in his long and controversy-ridden life, or of Henry Adams, whose self-deprecatory autobiography gave many readers a chill. One friendly reviewer of my Berenson volume called me a biographer of eminent but disagreeable persons. It is true that both had the knack of irritating and patronizing a considerable number of persons. It is equally true that they both had the remarkable capacity of forming a very large circle of friends, especially in their later years. Since Berenson was much more conspicuous in the world of affairs and high society, he succeeded in irritating a much larger number. He particularly angered British collectors and dealers whose pictures he demoted from originals to copies, or from Titians to second-raters, thereby reducing their market value by many thousands. To the outsider both Berenson and Adams seemed aesthetic culture snobs, skeptical of democracy and devotees of an elitist humanism.

Indeed both men did have some repellent traits. Adams's relentless pessimism and virulent anti-Semitism were hard to stomach. And Berenson's intellectual arrogance and scorn for the vulgar pretenders to culture were hardly endearing traits. Yet for me these many-faceted and complex lives opened up for intimate study fascinating areas of Anglo-American high culture. They provided lenses through which to look out upon an era of immense change, of revolutions in taste as well as in science, politics, and society. As Adams put it, the world had moved with vertiginous speed since his birth in 1838. Before the end of Berenson's life mankind had entered the space age with Sputnik I. The two men attracted me by their insatiable intellectual appetites and their encyclopedic knowledge. What commanded my admiration—if not my liking—was their lifelong effort to achieve the life of reason. They tried hard to solve the riddle of their own personalities and somehow make sense of their worlds. Mephistopheles may have declared that error was man's fate, but both men kept up the struggle against that fate to the very end. Berenson remained an optimist about mankind's destiny; Adams settled into pessimism in submission to the Second Law of Thermodynamics. Each in his way tried to impose order upon the chaos of thought. What MacLeish said of the poet's mission can be said of them:

The labor of order has no rest:
To impose on the confused, fortuitous
Flowing away of the world, Form—
Still, cool, clean, obdurate . . .

In the flowing away of the world, time was for Berenson the most precious dimension of life. There was so much to see, to apprehend, to relish on the palate of the mind. In age he used to say that he would willingly stand at a street corner hat in hand and ask the passersby to drop their unused minutes into it. Or he would fancy himself a condemned man on the gallows, crying out: "Time, time, O hangman, just one more moment."

One may not love the figure whom one has elected to study, but I think the scrupulous biographer owes it to a fellow human being to bring to his task sympathy, understanding, and even a bit of compassion. The malice of the debunker is as ignoble as the flattery of the sycophant.

Some years ago a noted art historian who had been snubbed by Berenson deplored the fact, in an article in *Encounter Magazine*, that Berenson had made a great deal of money in the practice of the profession of art expert. He insisted that one could not serve both God and Mammon. Hugh Trevor-Roper, the Oxford historian, who knew Berenson, replied in a later issue: "No doubt some pure, devoted spirits have worshipped at a private shrine and never made a penny. But there are others who, though they may have made fortunes, may also have contributed far more to the world in an immaterial sense than these pure spirits. Francis Bacon, Rubens, Voltaire, Keynes were men of genius who made a great deal of money out of their talents. Are we because of this . . . to dismiss them and their 'values' as false and corrupt in favor of some dull dog who may have created nothing but who at least never earned anything?"

It may well have been true that Berenson had a tendency from the very beginning of his art study, as I found, to overpraise a painting that caught his fancy at the moment. And later as an art expert he often did not restrain his superlatives in aid of a sale. Whether any of his attributions were knowingly wrong, as has been recently charged, is a question that provokes more heat than light.

No subject is so fraught with ambiguities—

and ill will—as that of attributions. Given the intensely secretive character of art dealing and the inaccessibility or absence of records, reliable evidence is hard to come by. For some there is an irresistible temptation to invent circumstantial evidence by innuendo. A painting once offered as a Titian may indeed, as techniques of attribution are refined, be now assigned to a lesser figure or accounted a school picture. That Berenson did not foresee this change is hardly evidence of corruption on his part. There can be no doubt that the pressure from owners of paintings and their agents to upgrade attributions was very great. At the height of his association with Duveen Brothers, Berenson published an article in the *International Studio* of July 1929 in which he said that dealers "sell as a rule under the biggest name an object will carry, and they fear that critics may dispute it. Criticism makes trouble and always will so long as collectors pay more for names than for the goods they cover." The letters show that again and again Berenson felt obliged to reject Joe Duveen's too generous nominations, though it meant the loss of a fee.

In the early years of the century, art critics and art historians were often simultaneously collectors of art who bought and sold on their own account or on shares with others. The notion of a conflict of interest was not as widely held as in our own day. And the question was not made any simpler by the fact that disagreement among art historians over the attribution of Old Masters was the rule rather than the exception.

The fact that Berenson earned a great deal of money as an art expert has always whetted curiosity. Marcel Proust, who owed a very great deal to Berenson's writings on art, could not resist asking a friend, How much money did Berenson make? I do not know what the friend answered. The answer of Harvard University, to which Berenson bequeathed the Villa I Tatti with its great library and art collection for the Harvard Center, might well be, "Not nearly enough."

In a life as varied and peripatetic as Berenson's, it has been no easy task to subdue to the printed page with its strictly linear movement the random jostlings of his existence. The enormous written record is both too full and too meager. One of the most important dimensions is missing, his conversation, which we are told by those who heard him was brilliant with epigram

and irony. I would have liked to construct a neat scenario and display the inner logic of events, the chain of cause and effect, the meaningful patterns of an evolving personality. But I found that neatness unravels a good deal around the edges of one's narrative. As he grew old, Berenson used to puzzle over the matter himself. Life seemed buffeted by chance and necessity. What if he had not met Mrs. Jack Gardner at one of Professor Norton's lectures? Or had not met his future wife at Haslemere one day in 1890? Or Joe Duveen in 1906, on the urging of Lady Sassoon? Or Nicky Mariano, who had happened to catch his wife's attention one day in Florence?

The writer of fiction has an advantage over the conscientious biographer. He can turn chance to advantage, as Thomas Hardy did to rescue a plot, or, like Hawthorne, have a man change the whole course of his life by walking down a different street after dinner. As a biographer one has to submit as gracefully as one can to the illogic of events. One's freedom is limited to those happenings which keep in the foreground the developing identity of the subject. It may be entertaining to speculate that an event occurred, or might have occurred, or even ought to have occurred, but one theorizes often at the expense of truth, especially from insufficient premises. I think it was Herbert Spencer who said there is no greater tragedy than a theory killed by a fact. There are often unbridgeable gaps in a life record and one is tempted to throw a line of conjecture across the abyss, especially in the service of an attractive thesis. In the process, truth is often crushed to earth, where it may lie disregarded for a very long time.

The ingenious author of a recent biography of Mrs. Henry Adams encountered, as I did, a considerable shortage of solid material on the lady. Thanks to an array of "probably's" and "must have's" he explained her suicide as probably being caused in part by her reading of her husband's novel *Esther*, in which some of her features and those of their friends were borrowed. The suggestion was enough for one reviewer to conclude that Adams was the subconscious assassin of his wife. That hers was a complicated hereditary mental illness, triggered by the death of her father, was obviously a less interesting explanation.

One of the most egregious examples of this



Isabella Stewart (Mrs. Jack) Gardner (1840-1924). Portrait in oil by Anders Zorn.

kind speculation appeared years ago in a study of the poet Emily Dickinson. For years writers have tried to find lovers for her. This author conjectured an unconscious lesbian tendency and then out of her fertile imagination constructed a climactic night of guilty love with a woman friend of the poet.

But it is not only the suppositions of guesses of a biographer that may lead one astray. Sometimes it is the subject himself. I think what originally challenged me to tackle Henry Adams was the discovery that in his autobiography he often unconsciously doctored his account of an experience to fit his thesis that his education had been a failure or to suit his mood of disenchantment. No amount of correction seems to have deterred later writers from treating the *Education of Henry Adams* as reliable history. I suspect the reason is that no corrector can compete with the brilliant language of the *Education*.

Error, as I have suggested, has an extraordinary vitality. Some time ago the beautiful

Marissa Berenson greeted us from the pages of *Playboy* magazine as the niece of Bernard Berenson. When one of his two nephews complained, an editorial assistant, a former student of mine, phoned me for a belated checkup. I explained that the curvaceous lady was a second cousin once removed of Berenson's. No correction appeared, but for a few years thereafter I received a complimentary copy of *Playboy* each month in a plain wrapper. *Time* magazine, even more inventive, identified her as a granddaughter of the childless Berenson in one of its stories. Thinking to serve truth I phoned in a correction. I was assured it would be made. Two years later she was still a granddaughter.

I think it is appropriate to interject at this point a remark of Mark Twain's. He wrote: "Carlyle said, 'A lie cannot live.' It shows he did not know how to tell them."

The line between fact and opinion is often obscure. For example, Kenneth Clark in his autobiography declares that Berenson forced masterpieces of painting "on a reluctant Mrs. Gardner." Her constantly renewed demand that Berenson find masterpieces for her deserves a quite different description.

It is often hazardous for a writer to read as he runs. For instance in a recent study of Berenson the author explains that when Berenson was denied a voice in the editorial policy of the *Burlington* magazine in 1903, he was only "temporarily discouraged" and that he tried again, without success, in 1907 when a new editor, C. J. Holmes, took over. The plain fact is that Holmes had been coeditor since 1904 and, according to Roger Fry, the chief voice in the editing of the magazine from the time of its reorganization at the end of 1903. Berenson made no second try. A hearsay comment in a letter in the Archives of American Art simply went unchecked.

A similar misreading of the record led the same author into a more egregious blunder. Berenson was buried according to the rites of the Roman Catholic church in a very imposing funeral ceremony, a processional pageant headed by monks with flaming torches. The author reports that "in obedience to Jewish custom he was buried in a shroud," presumably in a kind of secret repentance for his apostasy. An eyewitness writing in the *Reporter* described the frail and tiny figure in a winding sheet and

wrapped in a white cashmere shawl, such as he habitually wore to shield him from the cold. The shroud of Jewish custom was a complete invention, useful perhaps to support the author's thesis. In a recent conversation with the same eyewitness I was told that not only was there no Jewish shroud but that in Berenson's fingers was a rosary.

One piquant source of information and misinformation is, as I have found, reminiscence. The more distant the event the greater the chance of error. In this connection I am reminded of Mark Twain's lament in the ripeness of age: "When I was younger," he remarked, "I could remember *anything*, whether it happened or not. But now I am getting old and soon I shall remember only the latter." On another occasion he remarked, "It isn't so astonishing the things I can remember, as the number of things I can remember that aren't so." It took me a little while to become properly cautious about relying on recollections. In the third volume of my biography of Henry Adams I relied on Berenson's recollection in his *Sketch for a Self-Portrait* for the details of his reconciliation with Edith Wharton. Forty years after the event he recalled the dramatic moment in the dim light of Voisin's restaurant in Paris, where he had been invited to dine with Henry Adams. Adams's veiled companion delighted Berenson with her conversation. When the lights came up, he discovered to his surprise that she was Edith Wharton. The letters at I Tatti contemporary with the event quite remove the drama. The reconciliation took place a few days before in Adams's apartment and the dinner at Voisin's included several other friends.

A second illustration of Mark Twain's axiom came to my attention in the Berenson study already alluded to. It is told that Mrs. Costello,

the young matron who became Berenson's mistress and later his wife, tried to force herself upon Berenson with her suitcase in hand and that he puritanically turned her away. The piquant tale came secondhand out of a woman's romantic recollection of a talk with Berenson a half century after the supposed event. The passionate love letters which Berenson and Mary Costello exchanged in 1890 show that Berenson was no puritan at the time but a most ardent lover. Doubtless when they subsequently went off together to Germany as master and pupil, Mary did require a suitcase.

I must confess I have lost many a delightful tidbit by excluding unfounded gossip from my writing. As a scholar-biographer I have a strong prejudice in favor of reliable evidence and scholarly objectivity. A few reviewers have faulted me for this scruple. I believe it is fairer to let the facts speak for themselves without undue moral condescension and without the counsel of friends or enemies of the departed. The truth is hard enough to come by without burdening it with preconceptions. There may be money in the vividly debunking biography—or composite biography, as witness the recent bestselling book on the Supreme Court. But the truth, in greater or smaller degree, is often the first victim. It is the very rare reviewer who is able or willing to put the prospective reader on his guard.

The scholar-biographer may often deprive his readers of an entertaining anecdote or titillating conjecture, and his habit of looking before he leaps may sometimes force him to plod along in a circumspect fashion. But there is the consolation at least that he has not added to the swarms of delusions that pass for knowledge in the world.

From Rags to Riches

The Media in American Society

by John Tebbel

Except for a few specialists in the field, historians are not given to examining the role of the media in American life. While nearly every American president has been concerned to some extent about his treatment by the press, few academic historians of presidential administrations have considered the effects of the press much more than in passing. Whether, for example, William Randolph Hearst played a significant role in starting the Spanish-American War was once a subject of popular controversy, but serious historians of the McKinley administration, and of the war itself, scarcely do more than mention Hearst, if they refer to him at all.

This neglect may have been unwise, even unscholarly in some cases, but it has come to an end. If one examines the literature of journalism from

its beginning to 1960, roughly some four thousand volumes of it, the work of professional academic historians is scant indeed; but if we look at the literature of the past twenty years, it is easy to see that examination of the media has become almost a cottage industry, especially among sociologists who have drawn heavily on the techniques of the historian, and vice versa.

The dismaying fact about this phenomenon is not that it is abundant but that it is almost entirely critical. In thousands of monographs, essays, articles, reviews, and books, the number of those defending the media or presenting their work in a positive way is less than 5 percent. How much the impact of this massive assault has trickled down to the public is hard to say. But perhaps it is more than coincidence that the outpouring has occurred at a time when the media are under fierce and sustained attack from every quarter of American life, a time when the government and the courts between them are steadily narrowing the original meaning of the First Amendment until it promises soon to have little effect, and control will become a reality.

Why this change in the public's perception of the media? Are they doing nothing worth defending? Or is there some deeper reason for the widespread, pervasive hostility on the part of both the general public and the articulate portion of it which creates and transmits opinion, ranging

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from the academician to that new specimen the "media critic," who is paid to bite the hand that feeds him on the grounds that he is somehow fulfilling a responsibility and performing a public service. The hostility of the government and the courts is much more understandable. That is quite simply a power struggle, with important ramifications for all of us.

There has never been a time, of course, when the media were universally beloved. That is not their nature. Newspapers, especially, were born out of controversy, out of the struggle for power. As soon as the printing press was invented, it was apparent to both the primary sources of power in that day, government and the church, that whoever controlled what the new invention produced would be in a position to influence profoundly what people thought. Consequently the press was licensed at once by government, with the full approval of the church, and there was no semblance of freedom of the press from the fifteenth century until the first part of the eighteenth century when a few brave printers in colonial America risked their fortunes to defy the Crown and the provincial authorities. The print shop became the center for dissent in the eastern centers of population and carried the news of it inland to those removed from the daily spectacle of British rule.

In colonial America, the press was only secondarily a purveyor of news. Printers were generally not editors but were only craftsmen used by partisans of both sides, Tory and patriot, to advance their causes. The issue in the celebrated case of John Peter Zenger was essentially the right of dissenters to attack corrupt public officials. No one expected objectivity or responsibility; those concepts were more than a century away.

It is important to remember the totally partisan nature of the press before and after the Revolution, when it was again in the hands of political zealots, in order to understand the climate of opinion that produced the First Amendment. The delegates to the Constitutional Convention did not believe the press needed any special guarantee of freedom, but when the document they produced was sent to the states for ratification, that was foremost among the deficiencies which produced the grassroots revolt that resulted in the Bill of

Rights. Remembering the vital role the press had played in helping to secure their freedom from tyranny, the people of the new nation, still distrustful of giving too much power to government, insisted on a free press as the best means of making their governors accountable. They did so notwithstanding that the press of that time was guilty of the wildest, most irresponsible partisan excesses.

Jefferson and Madison understood the role that the First Amendment was intended to play better than anyone. When the Prussian ambassador strode into President Jefferson's office waving a Federalist paper full of abuse of the president and demanding to know why Jefferson did not have it suppressed and the editor punished, the president observed quietly, "Put that paper in your pocket, Baron, and should you ever hear the reality of our liberty, the freedom of the press questioned, show them this paper—and tell them where you found it." It had been lying in the waiting room.

When Madison was president during the War of 1812, and the nation was on the verge of disaster, papers in Boston and Georgetown argued that New England should secede and make a separate peace with Britain. Many thought Madison should use his wartime powers to suppress these seditious gazettes, but this chief architect of the First believed in its absolute character and refused. He considered a country without a free press hardly worth saving.

Thus a general pattern was set. People hated the newspapers that advocated ideas which were not theirs, but at the same time they supported those they agreed with. The same citizens who sacked Tory printshops before the Revolution continued to express their anger against opposing views in the same way well into the nineteenth century. Shops were destroyed and editors shot or horsewhipped, as Mark Twain amusingly "documented" in his *Journalism in Tennessee*. As for government, presidents made

FOLLOWING PAGES: The first and last pages of the November 25, 1734, issue of the *New-York Weekly Journal*. On November 17, 1734, John Peter Zenger was arrested for libel and so was not able to issue his paper that week. On the first page of the November 25 Journal Zenger describes his arrest and imprisonment. Serial and Government Publications Division.

THE
New-York Weekly JOURNAL

Containing the freshest Advices, Foreign, and Domestic.

MUNDAY November 25th, 1734.

To all my Subscribers and Benefactors
who take my weekly Journall.

Gentlemen, Ladies and Others;

AS you last week were Dis-
appointed of my Journall, I think it Incumbent upon
me, to publish my Apology which is this.
On the Lords Day, the Seventeenth of this Instant, I was Arrested, taken and Imprisoned in the common Coal Cell of this City, by Virtue of a Warrant from the Gouvernor, and the Honorable Francis Harrison, Esq; and others in Councill of which (God willing) yo'l have a Copy, whereupon I was put under such Restraint that I had not the Liberty of Pen, Ink, or Paper, or to see, or speak with People, till upon my Complaint to the Honourable the Chief Justice, at my appearing before him upon my *Habias Corpus* on the Wednesday following. Who dis-
countenanced that Proceeding, and therefore I have had since that Time, the Liberty of Speaking through the Hole of the Door, to my Wife and Servants by which I doubt not yo'l think me sufficiently Excused for not sending my last weeks Journall; and I hope for the future by the Liberty of Speaking to my Servants thro' the Hole of the Door of the Prison, to entertain you with my weekly Journall as formerly.

And am your obliged
Humble Servant,
J. Peter Zenger.

Mr. Zenger;

AS the Liberty of the Press is justly esteemed and universally acknowledged by Englishmen, to be the grand Paladium of all their Liberties, which Liberty of the Press, I have rejoiced to see well defended in Sundry of your Papers, and particularly by your No. 2, 3, 10, 11, 15, 16, 17, 18, 24, & 54. and by an anonymous Authors Observations on the chief Justices Charge of January last; now, for as much as it may not only be of present Use, but of future Advantage, that such Matters of Fact, that concern the Liberty of the Press, may be faithfully recorded and transmitted to posterity, therefore I have sent you a Detail of such particulars that concern the Liberty of the Press within this Colony, and because I would not have you or my self charged with the Publication of a Libel, I shall confine my self to a plain Narration of Facts without any comments.

On Tuesday the 15th of Octo. 1734. The suprem Court of New-York, began, when the Honourable James De Lancey, Esq; Chief Justice charged the Grand Jury. The Conclusion of which Charge was as follows.

Gentlemen, I shall conclude with reading a Paragraph or two out of the same Book, & concerning Libels; they are arrived to that height, that they call

Publisher. It is therefore Ordered by the Court, That the said Virulent, Scandalous and Seditious Songs or Ballads be burnt before the City-Hall, fitting the Court, by the hands of the common Hang-man, or Whipper, on Monday the 21st of this Instant, at 12 o'Clock, and that the High-Sheriff of this City and County do take Order accordingly.

*Per Cur. J. Hughes,
Cl. in Cur.*

On Monday the 21st of October, the Grand Jury of this City, addressed his Excellency the Governor to issue a Proclamation, promising a Reward to discover the Author, Printer and Publisher, of the two Songs mentioned in the above Order, which is Printed in the *New-York Gazette*, No. 470, and on the same day the above Order of the Supreme Court was put in Execution.

From the Votes of the Assembly.
Die Martis 9 ho. A. M. 22 October,
1734.

The House according to Order proceeded to take into Consideration the Request of a Committee of Council, delivered to a Committee of this House, on the 16th Instant, as likewise of the several Papers therein referred to, and after several Debate upon the Subject matters, it was ordered that the said Papers, and Request lie on the Table.

New-York, November 25, 1734.
We hear from Shrewsbury in New-Jersey, that the Honourable Lewis Morris, Esq; late chief Justice of this Province, and one of the Members of the General Assembly therof, and President of His Majesties Council of New-Jersey, did on Saturday last (together with his Son Robert Morris) Embark from that Place, on board of Capt. Payson for London, to solicit Matters of great Importance at the Court

of Great Britain; as well relating to this, as other the Northern Colonies in America. He was attended at his Departure by several Gentlemen of that Colony, the News whereof gave great Satisfaction to the Inhabitants of this City, who heartily wish him a good Voyage, Health and Success, and we believe it will be equally great to the Body of the People of this Colony.

And in all the Churches of this City, Prayers were yesterday publicly offered in their behalf.

Custom House, New-York, Inward Entries.
Sloop Two Brothers, Leonard Johnson from Virginia, Ship Prince William, T. Bayse from Jamaica.

Outward Entries.

Sloop Wheel of Fortune, J. Bosch for N-London & R-Island, Sloop Catharin, J. Johnson for St. Christopher, Sloop Mary, P. Neaslon for Jamaica, Ship Beaver, T. Smith for London.

Cleared for Departure.

Sloop Royal Ranger, R. Fowle, Sloop Rose, F. Burrows to Coracao, Sloop Catharine, T. Ware to Jamaica, Sloop John and Mary, J. Vanpelt to N-Carolina, Sloop Wheel of Fortune, J. Bosch to New-London & R-Island.

ADVERTISEMENTS.

* * * There is to be Sold, on reasonable Terms a Certain Meffuage or Tenement and 300 Acres of good Land, with two Grist-Mills, and a fine Stream of Water there unto belonging situated at the Fish-Kill, on the East Side of Hudson-River, in Dutches County, now in the Possession of Catharine Brett Widow, the same is very Convenient for Trade; and has been Settled for Near Five and Twenty Years past. Whoever has a Mind to purchase the same may apply to Mr. Joseph Read in the City of New-York Merchant, or to the said Catharine Brett, and be Informed of the Title and Conditions of Sale.

† That the following Tract of Land and Lots, are to be sold by Richard Van Dam, of the City of New-York, viz. A certain Tract of Land, laying and fronting Rariton River, near by Capt. Philip Folkerons, containing 333 Acres.

One upper Water Lot of Ground, being with in the City of New-York, fronting Queen-Street, over against Philip Davys, broad about 25 foot, and in length as far in the East River as to New Water Mark.

Three Lots of Ground being within the City aforesaid fronting Anne-Street, joining to the Brewhouse, of — Holt, deceased; now in the Possession of Jacob Trombert, each Lot, broad in front about 27 foot and, in Length about 140 Feet.

One Lot of Ground Lying and being near the Crapple Bush, and also the House, where he now Lives, is to be sold to be Lett, Inquire of said Richard Van Dam.

NEW-YORK: Printed and Sold by John Peter Zenger: By whom Subscriptions for this Paper are taken at three Shillings per Quarter; and Advertisements at three Shillings the first Week, and one Shilling every Week after.

no attempt to shut down newspapers even when provoked—and they were all provoked. In 1846 many newspapers fought "Mr. Polk's War" with Mexico, the most unpopular American conflict until Vietnam, but the president did not move against them. Lincoln, subjected to the greatest abuse from the Copperhead press—and even from papers of his own party—that any president had endured since the days of Washington and Jefferson, refrained from taking the measures he could have taken and restrained his generals' attempts at suppression.

Meanwhile, a great change occurred in the public's perception of the media between 1835 and the close of the Civil War. The central factor in this movement was the creation of a mass audience through introduction of the cylinder press. Newspapers, magazines, and books had earlier reached what was essentially an elite audience, but the cylinder press, the first major change in printing technology since Gutenberg, made it possible to reach millions with all kinds of printed materials.

The paperback revolution that began in 1842 had reached such proportions by the Civil War that these volumes were shipped by the bale to the fighting fronts, and civilians were reading them just as avidly. The press acquired a new respectability in 1835 when James Gordon Bennett introduced the modern newspaper, with news and editorials strictly separated, and set up as the ideal the notion of getting the news first and accurately. From then until the end of the century, the nation's important newspapers would be in the hands of great editors, many of them well known nationally. For the first time, one heard that phrase so often abused later, "the power of the press."

For they did have power. It mattered whether editors like Bennett, or Horace Greeley, or Charles Anderson Dana, or any of the others endorsed a presidential candidate or supported him after he was in office. A powerful newspaper could do much to swing an election. Moreover, in the midst of the most bitter partisanship before the Civil War, Henry J. Raymond introduced a new paper, the *New York Times*, which he declared would try to be objective. People turned to it with relief, and the concept of responsibility for news columns was introduced, or at least carried to a new level. Newspapers then and later were as partisan as

ever, but people recognized that an effort was being made to report the news as fairly as possible, despite many failures imposed by human limitations.

As for magazines, their explosive proliferation after 1825 was one of the phenomena of the century, and by 1900 they had become a national habit. Civil War issues were argued chiefly in their pages. General magazines arose to reflect literary and social tastes. Specialization began to give every kind of interest a printed outlet. After the war, magazines began to rival newspapers with their investigative reporting, and by the turn of the century, the ten-cent periodicals were in the forefront of the great reform wave that led Theodore Roosevelt to call their writers "muckrakers." People might quarrel over what the newspapers did, but they regarded magazines highly. Book publishing proliferated in much the same way and enjoyed the same kind of prestige.

In the early years of this century, however, advertising was the prime factor in bringing about another major change. Slowly, newspapers became less dependent on circulation as advertising increasingly became their main source of revenue. Magazines, too, changed in character as advertising also became their lifeblood. These media were, in fact, becoming institutionalized and, as the century wore on, they were no longer the product of individual entrepreneurs who had to rely solely on public favor, expressed by circulation figures. They were now businesses themselves, and they were delivering specific markets to advertisers who wanted to reach those markets. As business institutions, they were also becoming predominantly conservative.

The rise of radio and television completed the transformation. Here were mass marketers who reached far larger numbers of people, presumably had much more influence on them, and in the case of television, had the capability (as many people believed) to shape national tastes and affect the political process.

All this has changed our perception of the media. We say "the media" do this and do that, and the "mass media" are endlessly analyzed by every kind of expert and nonexpert. We see the media now as sources of power, and in a divided, contentious, litigious nation, every political, social, and ethnic group wants them to serve

its interests. If they do not, these groups are prepared to bring activist pressure against them to make them conform. As every editor knows, it is absolutely impossible to edit a newspaper or prepare a news broadcast that does not offend someone or elicit charges of bias. The cry from every group is that all it asks is fairness, but it is not fairness that is really desired. What all these groups want is advocacy, or news coverage that makes them appear as they want to be seen.

The situation is further complicated by the inability of the public to separate the editorial pages from the news columns. Often when people complain about a particular newspaper, it turns out that what has offended them is something in an editorial, or more likely, a political column, and so they condemn the whole paper as being biased. Not many people are qualified to pinpoint bias in a news story, but those who go looking for it are certain to find it, by their own lights. Although three-fourths of the nation's press is conservative, there are many people who are convinced it is liberal, even leftish, because a few of the largest and best known papers are either liberal or moderately so. There are no major dailies in the United States that could be considered left wing by any sane measurement, but there are many that are far to the right.

No one would think of telling a surgeon how to operate, or a lawyer how to conduct a trial, but there are any number of people ready to tell editors what news is and how to handle it. Many are the same people who regard writing as something they could do just as well themselves if they only had time. Newsmen and women make mistakes in their professional work—inevitably, when one considers the millions of facts handled every day—but they make no more than those in other professions, probably fewer. Doctors bury their mistakes, and lawyers write off theirs, but those that editors and reporters make are perpetuated in type, or preserved on film or tape, to be criticized freely by anyone.

Consider for a moment a few of the pressures from the public that the news media work under these days. Ethnic groups are perpetually dissatisfied with the way they and their affairs are depicted in the media. Militant Italian-Americans want the media to make the Mafia nonexistent by ignoring it, in the quite errone-

ous belief that media coverage leads the public to believe all Italians are criminals. Blacks complain that they are viewed only as lawbreakers or as welfare cases. Jewish organizations charge that the news from Israel and the Middle East is biased unless it perfectly reflects the views of the Israeli government. Feminist groups assert that only 10 percent of news content is about women and demand equal representation whether the content of a day's news justifies it or not. Homosexuals, Indians, and dissident political groups from Cuba, Puerto Rico, and European countries declare that the media either do not represent or else falsify their interests.

All these groups, and others, charge the media with bias and bring every kind of pressure they can summon to make them change. The media resist, reacting only to the occasional legitimate complaint. What possible resolution can there be to this conflict? Some advocate what they call access, meaning that the columns of newspapers, the pages of magazines, and time on news broadcasts be open to citizens for complaints or advancement of their interests. Only someone without imagination could seriously advocate such a course. The resulting chaos would be indescribable, even if such access were physically possible, and the media would cease to function.

What else, then? Take away control of the media from those who now own them, or impose some kind of legislative control on behalf of the "public interest"? Obviously, that would mean scrapping the First Amendment, and if that seems unthinkable to those in the communications business and others who understand the structure of our government, it is not at all unthinkable to large numbers of people. A recent Gallup poll showed that two-thirds of Americans cannot even identify the First Amendment, and repeated polls of high school students and young adults show a high percentage (more than half, in some instances) who think all news about government should be monitored by public officials before it is printed and that controls of some kind should be imposed on the press. 1984 is no farther away in many people's minds than it is on the calendar.

This public hostility toward the media has not yet crystallized, but there is every indication that it would, given the proper circumstances and the right leadership by a president who shared

these attitudes. The Nixon Administration was well on its way toward imposing comprehensive controls, especially on broadcasting, before its work was interrupted.

The hostility of government and the courts is another matter. Although the Founders clearly intended the press to be the means of making government accountable to the people, government has always resisted, since the time George Washington attempted to keep John Jay's treaty secret until he and Congress had discussed it and was frustrated because the story was leaked to a Philadelphia paper. In our time, now that technology has put the activities of government under a daily scrutiny that it has never known before, the resistance is greater, perhaps because there is so much more to conceal.

The courts have come to believe themselves threatened by the media, primarily because of their conviction that the Sixth Amendment supersedes the Fifth, but also because the deficiencies of the criminal justice system are so often in the news that courts tend to be sensitive about their prerogatives and their conduct.

Government and judicial pressures have come together in the actions of the Supreme Court in recent times. The Court did not really begin ruling on First Amendment cases until 1919, when the media had become large enough and institutionalized enough to be considered a threat by some interests. Until recently, most decisions favored the media, particularly during the days of the Warren Court and in the time of Justices Hugo Black and William O. Douglas, both of whom agreed with Jefferson and Madison that the First Amendment was absolute. Those decisions produced a complacency that proved to be unwarranted. Many political writers, lawyers, and even a few First Amendment specialists came to believe that no matter what the shifting ideological complexion of the Court might be, on balance the First Amendment would be preserved.

Then came the Burger Court, four of whose members were appointed by President Nixon. Chief Justice Burger was unabashedly hostile toward the media, and Anthony Lewis, of the *New York Times*, reporting on one session of the Court, noted that press claims in one case were greeted with "extraordinarily open expressions of scorn and hostility." A majority of the court

appeared to believe that the press should have no "special privileges," that it had no rights the ordinary citizen did not have.

The fruits of this philosophy were most evident in 1978, when a series of decisions shocked the communications industry, if no one else. In successive months, the Court made these decisions:

That government agents could obtain a warrant to search a newsroom for photographs, notes, and research files if they were seeking criminal evidence.

That radio broadcasters could be censured by the government—by "censured," they meant that the stations might get their licenses revoked—if they broadcast "indecent" words at times when children were likely to be in the audience.

That a reporter could be jailed for contempt if he refused to turn over his notes to a defense attorney or a judge.

Meanwhile, a U.S. appeals court gave police and government officials the right to secretly subpoena long-distance telephone records of reporters and news organizations.

Since then, courts have ruled that reporters could be compelled to answer questions about their state of mind when they were writing a story. In the case of former CIA official Frank Sneed and his book *Decent Interval*, the Court's refusal to hear the case meant that the United States had created the equivalent of the British Official Secrets Act by establishing that any government employee under contract who wrote about his work after he had left the job would have to clear it with the agency involved, whether or not classified material was involved.

This ruling means that no one who has had a government job, or who has one now, can write anything critical about his work or the government unless the government approves. The government can censor what he writes before it is published—prior restraint, by any measurement—and if it is published anyway, the government can take all royalties involved. It was not simply Sneed's First Amendment rights that were mocked by this decision, but the right of all of us to make government accountable. The Court, apparently, believes that a government contract supersedes the First Amendment.

There have been other dismaying decisions since then, but the net result of all of them is that it is now more difficult for the press to investigate the government and much easier for the government to investigate the press. If these

trends continue, the press will be excluded entirely from pretrial hearings, as they already have been in a growing number of cases. Government officials will be able to withhold information on grounds of secrecy, privacy, or simply government contracts with employees. The press would become an investigative arm of the police and the courts, through search warrants, subpoenas, and contempt citations. In Washington and elsewhere, whistle blowers, from future Deep Throats on down, would be gagged.

Serious questions are raised. Does the people's right to know have any meaning—and does anyone care? Does the right to gather news stop where government secrecy begins? Is the right to broadcast nothing more than a polite fiction, dependent on what government decides can be broadcast? It seems clear that government and the courts, between them, are bringing print and broadcasting together under one large umbrella of control. In the talk about deregulation, including the controls over broadcasting exerted by government through the FCC, not much is heard about removing the so-called Fairness Doctrine and the equal time provisions of the Communications Act—rules which, if applied to newspapers, would be patent denials of First Amendment rights.

With a hostile public, government, and court system, it would seem that the media's place in American society is under sufficient threat, but there is another large and powerful segment that has recently joined the attack. The business community has long regarded the press as its enemy. Having spent millions of dollars on public relations and institutional advertising, business sees its efforts to create a favorable public image blunted, if not negated, by newspaper and television reporting of its affairs. Like government, business does not like to see its misdeeds disclosed. When it cries for fairness, it is no different from the other pressure groups who really mean that they want the news written and displayed as they would have it.

Business is in a position to do something about it, however, and it is bringing pressure to bear in various ways. Increasingly businesses are suing broadcasters, newspapers, and magazines, and they have now begun to hint at using their ultimate weapon, that is, withholding advertising from a medium they consider unfair—a kind of refined blackmail. It has been getting

results. Since advertising is the lifeblood of all the media (except book publishing), without which they could not exist, some newspapers and television stations have already fired or reassigned reporters and editors who have antagonized business interests with consumer-oriented stories. The *Los Angeles Times*, in a recent report on this phenomenon, disclosed that the number of full-time consumer reporters in the news media has already fallen from 500 in 1974, the peak, to only 200 today. If this general campaign succeeds, the ability to alert the public to business abuses needing correction will be diluted to the point where *laissez-faire* will prevail. Business is already extremely effective in blocking any kind of media investigation of its practices.

Government has shown that it can and will censor books it doesn't like, but businessmen cannot retaliate in the same way. Consequently, book publishing emerges as the one remaining relatively free forum, tolerated by its enemies largely because of the relatively low circulation of individual books. Television, obviously, is a far greater threat to any institution which has something to conceal.

It will do no good for any of the media to cry *mea culpa* and swear that they will henceforth do their utmost to be fair and accurate. They will never be perceived as being so by government, business, or the public unless they convey images that reflect the way these elements want to see themselves. Nobody wants to read bad news about himself, which is why the press of authoritarian countries offends no one except those who want to know what is happening. As the old Moscow joke goes, referring to *Pravda* ("truth") and *Izvestia* ("news"), "There's no news in the truth, and no truth in the news."

What are the American media, in any case—that collection of institutions which we are forever asserting do this or that or should be doing something else? In spite of the fact that so many people see them as some kind of monolithic attackers of American values, they are in fact incredibly varied. They consist of 1,744 daily newspapers, predominantly conservative; 8,000 or so weeklies or bi- or tri-weeklies, again almost entirely conservative if they have any ideological bent at all; 8,434 broadcasting stations, two-thirds of them without network affiliation and providing the greatest possible

multiplicity of voices because the great majority (three-fifths) of news and public affairs broadcasts originate with local stations (all but a small fraction of radio stations are local); at least 22,000 magazines and probably many more (the industry does not keep accurate figures), representing the most diverse array of interests and opinions on the globe; and several thousand book publishing houses, only a few of them "giants," and like the magazines, serving the widest possible spectrum of opinions and interests.

When we hear people complaining about "the media," then, it is certainly legitimate to ask them what media they are talking about. More often than not, it turns out they are thinking of something they have just read or viewed that runs counter to their own ideas. There is, plainly, a vast difference between the way the media are viewed in this country and what they really are.

Americans like to talk about the freedoms they enjoy in comparison to other nations. But there is one area that history has proved over and over again is vital to freedom, and that is the right embodied in the First Amendment, the right to print and broadcast, to gather news and opinions and disseminate them without hindrance. We have seen repeatedly the brutal seizure and control of communications in au-

thoritarian countries everywhere, and rightly deplore it. Democracies do it differently, by nibbling away through laws, through ideologically motivated court decisions, and by pressure from groups who want to suppress what they do not like. It is one freedom that cannot be qualified without imperiling the whole; the opening of one door leads to the opening of a thousand others.

There is another kind of control to which all the media, individually and collectively, are subject—and must be in a free society. Every citizen has the right to switch off his television set or change channels; to do the same with his radio; to not buy the newspaper he doesn't like, or the magazine or the book. It is utterly misleading to say that the choices are narrowing. Taken together, the media in America offer a diversity not even remotely equaled anywhere else on the planet—more than any individual can cope with. These choices are increasing and with the advent of new cable and satellite technology, they are going to multiply in a staggering way. Controls of any kind can only limit these multitudinous choices, especially if they are dictated by ideology or internal power struggles.

At the moment, we still have the freedom to choose.

Some Recent Publications of the Library of Congress

Arab-World Newspapers in the Library of Congress. 1980. 85 p. (S/N 030-000-00120-6) \$3.50. Near East Series. Prepared by George Dimitri Selim, Near East Section. An alphabetical list by language and country of those Arabic-language newspapers published throughout the world and Western-language newspapers published in the Arab countries that are in the collections of the Library of Congress, with information about the Library's holdings. Indexed by title and place of publication.

The Best of Children's Books, 1964-1978. 1980. 90 p. (S/N 030-001-00093-1) \$3.75. Compiled by Virginia Haviland, Children's Literature Center. This selected list of children's books currently in print will be of use to all librarians, teachers, and parents looking for what will interest children today in the realms of fiction and nonfiction. Drawn from fifteen annual lists, *Children's Books, 1964* through *Children's Books, 1978*, these titles were compiled by Virginia Haviland, chief of the Children's Literature Center at the Library of Congress, and a committee of specialists in the Washington, D.C., area. Arranged alphabetically by author within ten categories—ranging from picture and picture-story books to nature and science and psychology and sociology—each entry provides price, publisher, and ISBN as well as a brief descriptive annotation and designation of appropriate grade level. Illustrations decorate the text.

Buckaroos in Paradise: Cowboy Life in Northern Nevada. 1980. 95 p. \$7.95. By Howard W. Marshall, American Folklife Center, with an exhibition catalog by Richard E. Ahlborn, National Museum of History and Technology. Available from the Information Office, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. 20540. In 1979 the Library's American Folklife Center sponsored the Paradise Valley Folklife Project, an investigation of cowboy life in the Paradise Valley region of

northern Nevada. A team of folklorists directed by Howard Marshall of the center conducted interviews, took photographs, and collected artifacts of everyday life from the people of the region. This book accompanies an exhibition of these artifacts at the National Museum of History and Technology, Smithsonian Institution, from October 1, 1980, until March 31, 1981. It includes an essay on the history, culture, and contemporary life of Paradise Valley, an illustrated catalog of the exhibition items, and many photographs of Nevada buckaroos and of the region.

On the History of Libraries and Scholarship: A Paper Presented before the Library History Round Table of the American Library Association, June 26, 1979. 1980. 25 p. By I. R. Willison. The Center for the Book Viewpoint Series, No. 4. Free from the Center for the Book, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. 20540. Ian R. Willison, head of the Rare Book Collections at the British Library, has issued a challenge to the American Library Association Library History Round Table, to all historians of libraries or of scholarship, and to the reading public. He asks that attention be paid to the connection between the development and administration of libraries and the evolution of scholarship. The future requires, in his words, "interaction between a constantly enlarging encyclopedic enterprise and a constantly enlarging critical reading public." Otherwise, "our actual living in history can exceed the capacity of our unaided intellect to understand it."

Letters of Delegates to Congress, 1774-1789. Volume 6, January 1-April 30, 1777. 1980. 760 p. (S/N 030-000-00101-0). Edited by Paul H. Smith with the assistance of Gerard W. Gawalt, Rosemary Fry Plakas, and Eugene R. Sheridan. Primary source documents describe the activities and ideas of the delegates to the Conti-

national Congress during the first year of the war for independence. Notes of congressional debates, official and personal correspondence, diary entries, and other manuscripts are brought together here for the use of students, scholars, and all others interested in the revolutionary era. Annotations, bibliographic references, illustrations, and an extensive subject index complete the volume.

A National Preservation Program. 1980. 125 p. (S/N 030-000-00121-4) \$4. Prepared by the Library's Preservation Office. This book describes the proceedings of a two-day meeting held in 1976 at the Library of Congress, which was attended by over fifty conservators to plan a national preservation program. The conference was both a review of past preservation programs and an assessment and evaluation of the most pressing needs of the preservation community.

Specifications for Microfilming Manuscripts. 1980. 21 p. (S/N 030-000-00128-1) \$2.00. Prepared by the Library's Photoduplication Service. Specifications are provided for manuscript preparation, filming procedures, and film processing, which will enable a repository to produce archival film of high technical and bibliographic quality. This guide contains the procedural and technical changes in the Library's photoreproduction methods adopted since 1964. There are ten illustrations, three tables, and a glossary of microfilming terms.

Ten First Street, Southeast: Congress Builds a Library, 1886-1897. 1980. 102 p. (S/N 030-000-00122-2). A catalog for an exhibition in the Thomas Jefferson Building of the Library of

Congress. By Helen-Anne Hilker. A splendid Italian Renaissance building opened in 1897 to house the national library of the United States, the library of its legislators and of all its citizens, the Library of Congress. Helen-Anne Hilker's essay for the catalog of an exhibition on that building, which she calls a "monument to civilization," chronicles its history and describes the marvels that greeted tourists and scholars who came there at the end of the nineteenth century: marble halls, murals and decorative designs, bas-reliefs, busts and full-figure statues, the Neptune Fountain, a grand plaza, and a gilded dome. The exhibition features two slide shows, original furnishings, souvenirs and memorabilia, and numerous photographs representing the Library's original home in the U. S. Capitol, the design competition held by Congress for a Library building, alternative designs and changes in them, the actual excavation for and construction of the building, the artists who ornamented it, the sculpture, murals, and mosaics they created, and finally the new construction and renovation required in later years. The catalog contains many illustrations, a picture story of the construction from excavation to completion, and a chronology by John Y. Cole.

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